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YE MOUNTAINEER

BY
BINGHAM THOBURN WILSON

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114 Fifth Avenue
NEW YORK

96 Queen Street
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Ye Mountaineer.

The American Printing House,
110 W. 11th St., New York.

WITH A FEELING OF RESPECT BORN OF A
FRIENDLY SCHOLARSHIP,

THIS POEM IS DEDICATED

TO

CHARLES WESLEY MUNGER,
OF GARVANZA, CALIFORNIA.

INTRODUCTION.

IN offering the following poem to the indulgence of the public, I deem it wise to preface the same with a concise explanatory introduction, containing as well a bit of history that may be of aid to the reader in grasping more fully the situations that lie within. I am well aware that in this the beginning of the Twentieth Century, the public is loath to receive a story dating back to a period, that, beyond the attention of the political enthusiast or student, is almost forgotten; and expects, in its stead, a tale dealing with more modern achievements. Then too, it is with the deepest of possible regrets, that I note the changeful tastes of the mighty masses, gradually neglecting the songful Muse that has made each age glorious in recording its most worthy achievements; thereby turning a light of imperishable beauty upon the duller page of History, and leaning with preference to that class of literature that can be speedily read, then cast aside, and soon forgotten.

A short time ago this same subject was the topic of conversation in a party of gentlemen,

among whom were two former indentures of New York City publishers, and to my surprise they were open in their discouragement of any large poetic publication, from a financial standpoint, no matter what the merit or who the author might be, one even going so far as to say with almost dramatic firmness, that if Byron himself were to walk into his sanctum with a new "Childe Harold," though multiplied in beauty a hundred times, he would refuse to publish it; but should he be induced to do so "for the sake of literature," he further ventured the belief, that its reception to-day would be as cold and informal as it was once grand and imposing. With the last I could not agree, for to me it does seem: as long as the world has woes, as long as the heart answers to the nobler sentiments and passions, so long will the Muse find a welcome place in the minds of the more appreciative, nor months, nor years, nor ages, can depreciate its reception, for the older the story, the sweeter seems the song.

But this is truly called the age of gold—to many, the extreme limit of comprehension, the end of all purpose, the mecca of affection, and often I fear, even the policy of pretended religious devotion: smothering every intuitive sentiment that is struggling for higher development, by forcing worship at its feet; rebellious to the higher

press and its output, by making time too precious to read, and destroying the glorious object of our public schools by driving children almost in infancy from their doors to the factory; while nurses at its foul breast, the positive incentives to covetousness, ignorance, falsity, and crime. Destroying true brotherhood; strangling true friendship, and exiling by separation that beautiful spirit of social and intellectual communion—this is the Master that is driving man into the land of greed and will in time banish him beyond all hope upon a veritable Patmos of selfishness, from which he may never return. And yet, amid the busy scenes of life, thousands lay down its burdens and its cares, to cast their eyes across the page of song.

In attempting such an extensive composition, whether it be meritorious or otherwise, such open expressions from men who have held the literary pulse, are anything but encouragements, especially to the man who slips home weary indeed from his business cares and is forced for a moment of silent thought to the late companionship of the midnight oil, and were it not for that unexplainable spirit of fealty that has caused great men to forsake fortune; bowing at the very feet of the Muse with a spirit of worship almost equal to idolatry, long since the task might have been given over. But this to me has been a labor of

idle hours. Alone and unaided I have toiled over these stubborn mountains and drank mental refreshment at their imaginary springs; nor am I particularly anxious about its general reception, for I know a few hearts that will beat for it a warmer welcome than perhaps it deserves, and to that knowledge of its appreciation I am satisfied.

From my earliest recollection there has always been something musical and charming about the words, Lake Champlain, and as I grew older and learned of the many deeds of valor, devotion and love that had been enacted upon its shores, I could hardly understand how so many writers that have since lived, each contributing their beautiful garlands to American literature, could have passed them by unsung. The leading characters in the following story are living heroes in tradition's mind, although the link that binds them into a tangible relationship has long since corroded with the rust of forgetfulness, and beyond any doubt many beautiful characters have drifted away from the now unsymmetric whole and are lost forever. In the story, for the convenience of versification, as well as the interest of the local historian, I have used assumed names, which I think will prove an interesting puzzle in the location of historic parallels, which are identical with these fictitious personages.

The general historic facts of the story are true in detail, and the many local prejudices against the crown, which history fails to record, but perhaps to which tradition has been more than indulgently kind, I have gathered by the most painstaking research, and have embodied the principal one in the story which opens, although without positive date, in the winter of 1774 and 1775.

The first Canto deals with the settlers of our country during that portion of colonial history immediately preceding the war of the Revolution. Along the shores of Lake Champlain in what is now the State of Vermont was aroused undoubtedly, the first spirit of revolt against the mother country, brought on by the weakness of King George in allowing the nullification of the titles to their lands, which by the crown had been decided in the year 1740 as a part of the original New Hampshire colony, but that New York claimed as a portion of that grant given by Charles II. to the Duke of York. The dispute was purely of a local nature and between the colonies of New York and New Hampshire, and tradition tells of much bitterness on both sides; but when King George sustained the claim of the colony of New York, New Hampshire settlers were ready to fly to arms. Officers from New York went in to levy taxes and in many instances were handled roughly

by the hardy mountaineers. Happily, however, the contending issue was short lived, for this, with other indiscretions of the crown so enraged the settlers, that in the following spring the flood of Revolution swept over the entire territory from the St. Lawrence to the Gulf of Mexico, and the powerful colony of New York, joining gloriously in the common cause, either forgot, or most nobly laid aside all animosity, and, leaving their differences to be settled at another time, went to a man upon the field of battle.

Seldom does history record such fervent devotion to a cause as was here displayed, or scarce does it recall a ruler of so little diplomacy as King George. Having the situation at hand, it was his, with a reasonable amount of kindness, judgment and indulgence to have held us long what Canada is to-day, and it might have been the lot of long after years to cast that greatest of living titles, "The Father of Our Country" upon some other than the brow of our glorious and immortal George Washington; but we are all liable to err, and it hardly seems just to look backward with other than the kindest of criticisms upon the actions of that unfortunate and alike, unhappy king. There is a destiny that shapes our ends, and, when that end is reached, we trace the writing of the hand of fate where we read, "The leaf and the

flower fall victims alike in death." George sleeps entombed in that mighty mausoleum of merit, justice and tyranny, St. George's chapel, at Windsor, and whatever were his deficiencies in life, may the Angel of Mercy breathe over his silent urn naught but the prayer of peace.

Among the bordering mountains on the western side of Champlain and on both sides of Lake George these situations lie and many within a few miles of that once powerful English Fort Ticonderoga, where, farther west, around the minor lakes of the Adirondacks, our hero had begun a mountain warfare against the King, and coming to Lake Champlain in mid-winter, he is driven to the home of a settler for shelter from the terror of the gale.

It is here for the first time he sees the reward that is offered for his head, and for the first time seems to comprehend the gravity of the unenviable position he occupies. This picture of a price for murder is, I think, not unjustly drawn, for several far more lucrative were sent out from the English throne, a few years later by the same King, one in particular which I might mention being for ten thousand guineas (\$52,500) for the head of John Paul Jones, that midget Napoleon of the seas. The second Canto is purely descriptive and

occupies the last colonial summer precedent to the Revolution.

The third is a compilation of happy events, finishing each character in that peace of both body and mind which their diligence, devotion, and fearlessness so justly deserve.

However enshrouded by the mist of uncertainty we admit the characters to be, it does not destroy any of the grandeur or picturesqueness of the land in which the story lies. Few, indeed, if any bodies of water in the world exceed in beauty Lake George or Lake Champlain, where, rising over their mirror-like surfaces, the vaulting mountains vie in height with the very skies. Near the southern end of Lake Champlain, Ticonderoga, a crumbling ruin, stands to-day a voiceless, silent witness to the struggle; and oft its rocky remnants resound to the tales of tradition's tongue, as told of Ethan Allen and his fearless militia, or Stark and the Green Mountain boys.

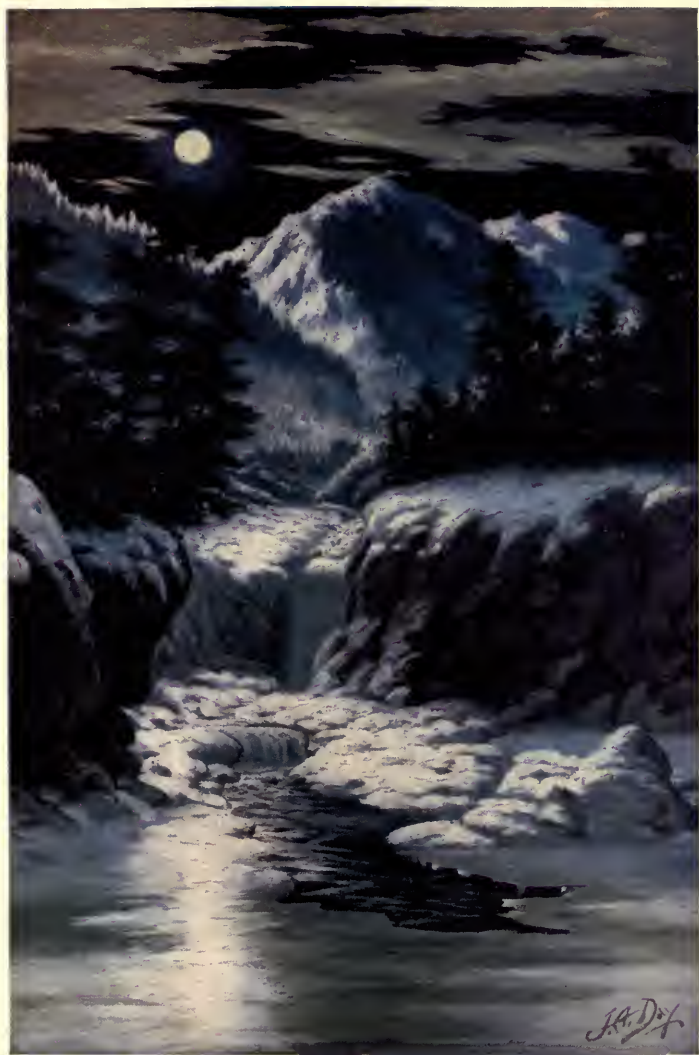
In conclusion permit me to say, over a hundred years have passed and gone since the memorable events herein described, and peace and plenty have taken the place of sword and flame. A mighty nation rises to-day where then the infant struggled for its liberty, yet in all these years, those deeds of valor, devotion, and love, by poets have remained unsung.

This humble tribute to their achievements, unworthy though it be, I herewith commend to your care, satisfied a thousand times if it but inspire one heart to a greater love for his country, and a more heartfelt appreciation of the spirit of valor that led those men and women who offered their lives as a sacrifice upon the altar of war.

I hope to leave a pleasing impression of both these places and people.

THE AUTHOR.

CANTO I.
LAKE CHAMPLAIN.



YE MOUNTAINEER.

CANTO I.

LAKE CHAMPLAIN.

The evening sun had sunken down
Beneath the mountains lofty crown.
Each slender spire along the chain,
That reared its head o'er Lake Champlain,
Reflected back the sun's last glow,
From off their gleaming peaks of snow;
And cast their shadowed forms away
Where frozen o'er the waters lay;
But underneath the sturdy hill,
Leafless, the woods lay dark and still,
For winter's icy, iron hand,
Fettered each brook throughout the land—
And silenced many a babbling tongue,
That through the summer ceaseless sung.
But now, no sound disturbs the air,
Where rugged cliffs rise cold and bare;

Save when the owl, with mournful wail,
His hideous song pours through the dale,
And answering back from far away,
The faithful watch-dog's heavy bay,
With faint re-echo shakes the glen,
Where all grows calm and still again.

But when the Moon ascends the sky
From o'er the eastern mountain high,
Each lofty craig, each snowy chief,
Breaks from the sky in bold relief;
Like huge majestic guards that stand,
Appointed by divine command,
To watch with turbaned brows of snow,
The slumbering lake that lies below:
And the tall chain of endless guard,
Deep covered with the spotless sward
Of winter, meets the vaulting blue,
Till distance dims the wandering view;
Where rugged storm-tried pines look down,
From off the mountain's mantled crown,
But hold their snowy arms outspread,
Above the tallest giant's head,
As if some holy sacred spell,
In settling o'er the quiet dell
Had by a weird, but magic skill,
Made a white altar of each hill;

Where rising o'er the vales below,
These priest-like trees in gowns of snow,
Arose with outstretched arms, and prayed,
A benediction o'er the glade.

Calm was the night, both calm and cold,
And winter firmer grasped its hold,
That long had known this stubborn clime,
For now 'twas after Christmas time.
A Christmas-time that to each boy
Had brought all else of earth save joy:
For in each home throughout the land,
The law of an oppressor's hand
Had thrust beside the fireside there,
To all the unwelcome guest of care.
A care: that bowed each pious head;
From which long years before they fled,
And gladly to the breeze unfurled
Their sails, toward a new-found world.
Vain was the hope that long was theirs,
Though freedom still adorned their prayers;
A Monarch's unjust laws pursued,
That every cherished hope subdued:
While through their thriving hamlets ring,
The unjust mandates of the King.
But to his chief ne'er savage sprang
More swift, when loud the war cry rang;

Than answered they the leader's ire,
Who fanned the smouldering wrath to fire;
As, frequent pausing 'mid their toil,
He vowed the freedom of the soil.

From out the leafless woods that reared
Its naked boughs, three forms appeared.
The first, though aged, would dare to brave
The angered tiger in its cave,
And well with ease his iron frame,
A giant's wrathful ire might tame.
A patriot he whose mighty arm
Rebuked the cavil of alarm,
And ready rose to deal the blow
Whene'er injustice was the foe.
Thus oft inviting him to seek
The council of the poor and weak,
Had caused an enemy to bring
His name reproachful to the King,
That brought for noble deeds instead
An offering on his aged head.
There are to many mortals given
Some touch, some attribute, of heaven
A look, a grace, that like a chain
Binds mortal to immortal claim,
And some, whose very smiles foretell
The fiendish impulses of hell.

Such was the second. By his word
A Tory of the purest blood,
Whose zeal, devoted to the crown,
Lived in unenviable renown.
The third, of all his race, a last
Reminder of its mighty past.
A Chieftain acting as a guide,
Whose birthright was the mountain-side,
Chose cautiously the hidden trail
That snow-bound lay o'er hill and vale.
Strong in each feature, e'en though time
Had ravaged far beyond his prime,
There yet was shown an eye as clear
As guides the caution of a deer,
Advanced a rod or more he led
The way, with careful measured tread.
'And as they journeyed onward each
Gave audience to the other's speech.
The first spoke out: "I tell to thee
These hills shall shout the jubilee;
Though ere 'tis done, the cruel steel
Life's precious current oft will feel;
These spying knaves, these Tory bands,
Prowl round our homes, plunder our lands,
And by taxation turn to spoil
The choicest products of the soil.
Should one complain, dare one rebel,
'A threatening murmur sweeps the dell,

And if he dares denounce again
The village crier has his name.
Here, gaze on this!" and forth he drew
A parchment that he spread to view.
First: "A Reward!" then "For ye head
Of Rolland Dale," the poster read;
"One Thousand Pounds," and as he spoke
A storm of anger o'er him broke.
Then, as it were a poisonous Asp,
He crushed it in his wondrous grasp,
And with one stroke his mighty hand
Scattered the fragments o'er the land.

"Stranger, beware! for I have known
Where far less disrespect was shown
A summons to the Monarch's guard
And dungeon shackles the reward.
This Rolland Dale, Ye Mountaineer,
A murderous malcontent, I hear,
Holds now by force the sterile lands
Where bold Blue Mountain towering stands.
They say of his, an hundred men,
Dispute each mountain-pass and glen;
And that his eye unerring came
Ever as yet on foe or game.
Though dwelling west, each mountain brave
Is outlawed from along this wave,

That should he seek Lake Champlain's tide
Will not be wanting for a guide,
For many of his mountain band
Are legal exiles from this land.
His head is safe. The band of spies
And traitors swarm as thick as flies;
And few might dare that prize to claim
That know the danger of his aim.
But though his force is strong and brave,
He best not venture on this wave.
For here the King's command repays,
The traitor that from service sways,
By seizing all he claims his own;
Then confiscating land and home,
An outcast beggar, he must dwell,
Or worse, within a dungeon's cell,
A life-long comrade to despair,
As sure as is my name Le Clair!
Here, stranger, listen; well you know
Ticonderoga lies below.
Around that Fort, tell me, I pray,
What fear of mountaineers have they?
For there, its walls alone exposed,
Stand firm, with well armed men enclosed;
And well each settler seeks but grief
To harbor such a wreckless chief.
Nor is the prize of pardon bought
As freely as the crime is sought.

All of earth's power could not assuage
When once aroused the Monarch's rage.
Though humbled at his very feet,
Useless to plead, vain to entreat;
Better to ask yon peak to rise
Thrice higher in the vaulting skies,
Or call yon Eagle to return,
Or strive these cliffs of stone to burn.
I tell thee now, dare not confide
Thy life to such a foolish guide."

Quick the old patriot paused, the ire
Shot from his eye with flash of fire,
Turned on Le Clair a threatening look
That none would safely dare to brook:
"Stranger, the insult I resent
By spurning further argument;
And gladly free from claim I toss
Such friendship as a thankful loss.
Nor can a patriot discern
Why one would dare against him turn,
When all the country waits to hear
Good tidings from the Mountaineer;
'And on Virginia's far-off coast
Ready awaits an armed host;
Nor could the darkest dungeon tame
Within an honest heart that flame.

Incensed, ill-governed, and abused,
 What settler here but has refused
 To vow allegiance like a slave;
 Better a thousand times the grave!
 Another year will scarce roll round
 When through each rocky glen the sound
 Of clashing arms and cannon's roar
 Will shake these hills from shore to shore.
 I tell thee, Sir; I swear, as sure
 As is yon mountain's mantle pure,
 The imposing King shall not retain
 One foot of land on Lake Champlain.
 For this, by Heavens! is freedom's land!
 Nor freemen fear a King's command.
 These very mountains every morn
 Frown on each settler's home with scorn,
 And, looking downward from the sky,
 Seem to bend o'er, and shout, defy,
 Nor leave the field with danger rife,
 Till freedom bids thee quit the strife.
 Mark what you hear. Le Clair, I say!
 If turns the strife the other way,
 And fate against us dares decide,
 Then say old Vermont vilely lied."

"Pardon offence, but, stranger, here
 More has the settler now to fear,

Nor is alone a Hessian host
The only friends King George can boast.
Already waits each savage tribe
That dwells along the mountain-side
To rise in one concerted band,
And drive the settlers from the land;
And torch, and battle-ax, and blade
Are offered to the Monarch's aid.
This very guide that brought you o'er,
From whence I know not to this shore
Will wail the summons to the sky,
Then rally to the battle-cry,
And sweep from Champlain to the sea
With one red flood of massacre."

'As the old Chieftain checked his pace
An anger fired his swarthy face.
Not twice the insult need be sent
To cause the savage to resent,
'Twas said, nor would the anger stay
By idle parlance of delay;
Like gleams the lightning from the cloud,
Like unexpected thunder loud,
Like sweeps the sullen darkness when
The shadowed sun forsakes the glen,
So flashed, so scowled his eye with ire;
The dagger, to the quick desire,

Shot back the twilight high in air,
Then glistening, poised above Le Clair.
Death hovered with a ghastly greed,
But ere the frightful, fatal deed,—
That instant Vermont quickly threw
His mighty form between the two,
And with a semblance of his strength
Stretched his two mighty arms at length:
“Hold! Chieftain, let not injured pride
Your better judgment turn aside.
Is honor of such metal made
And folly now so dearly paid,
That for a trifle, human life
Becomes a sacrifice to strife:
Or murder falls the dire reward
Of argument or idle word?”
He held the angered two apart,
“Such words of violence impart
But wrathful ire, I know, and yet,
Chieftain, forbear, lest you forget,
And lest thy conscience be allied
With long-regretted homicide.”
The Chief reluctantly obeyed,
But, angered still, he sheathed his blade.

Then turning to the foeman, said:
“’Tis useless that my wrath is stayed;

I wait a more auspicious time
To do full justice to the crime
In some remote and welcome spot,
For Red Cloud never yet forgot.
But, comrade, thanks to parted strife
Yon wretch, yon ingrate, owes his life.
Thrice thankful that my arm was stayed,
For treacherous blood so vile was made
To stain the bludgeon, not the blade."
"Le Clair," the ire yet uncontrolled
From heaving breast to vision rolled.
"We part. No exile from his shore
Longs for his native hearthstone more
Than my impatient arm to wield
The death-blow on the battle-field.
Nor earth's remotest spot can save
That hour of meeting but the grave.
Companion, yonder lies the shore,
My promise kept, the journey o'er,
No longer now the mountain-side
Commands the service of a guide;
For in yon distant vale below,
Where rises through the falling snow
That trailing, slender, smoky wreath,
'A settler's homestead lies beneath.
'And three due southern leagues will bring
In view the stronghold of the King."

The Chieftain from the stranger turned
 And the bright offering he spurned;
 But ere he reached the distant chain
 He paused and shouted back again:
 "Stranger, be watchful of the snare;
 Yon culprit shadows thee, beware!
 Beware of treachery foretold,
 Thou art within the lion's fold;
 And lest he take thee by surprise,
 Red Cloud now warns thee to be wise.
 Ill fate be to the King; till then,
 Farewell, Le Clair, we meet again."

Loud rang with wild and echoed strain
 Those harrowing words: "We meet again,"
 Nor died along the frozen tract
 Till thrice the mountains answered back,
 Prolonged and loud, as if to tell
 Their dreadful import to the dell.
 So long the vibrant seemed to stay,
 Re-echoed up the rocky way,
 That swift the fox sped from the glen,
 And deep the wolf growled in its den.
 The screech-owl wakened from its dream,
 The hawk shot upward with a scream;
 And over all the watchful crow,
 In eboned contrast to the snow,

Perched high upon a blasted arm,
Cawed forth a chorus of alarm;
Enough of twilight lingered still
To light the travelers down the hill—
Enough, yet scarce enough to free
The foot from care's dexterity,
Till watch-dog answered back the call
And darkness settled over all.

Deep in the woodland far below
A settler's home rose o'er the snow,
And cheerful fires made welcome where
The drowsy smoke curled high in air,
For on this evening chanced to stay
Two settlers with old Nathan Gray,
Who, as they gathered round the hearth,
Sang songs of love, told tales of mirth,
And while the merry tales were told,
Passed round the sparkling cider-bowl,
And made the very rafters ring
With praise to all save England's King,
For here their ire was sorely pressed,
And wrangling hatred filled each breast;
'Twas here that Liberty, when young,
First heard the shout of battle song;
And, while oppression's lash applied,
Learned first to take its infant stride.

Discussion held the evening long,
And many a settler joined the throng,
For Vermont's mighty wondrous name
Grown far beyond a local fame,
Oft met each malcontent's applause
As now he championed their cause.
Le Clair, all silent, while he heard
Their future plans, said not a word,
But soon forsook the party gay ;
But ere he started on his way,
Promised he would return once more
When the next day of toil was o'er ;
But the next day from toil was free,
For from the west lands to the sea
A raging wintry storm bore down
That covered deep each mountain crown ;
And ere the evening taper burned,
Swept by the storm, Le Clair returned.
Long was the parting now delayed,
And many a secret hope betrayed,
While oft the paper window-panes
Shook to the Christmas carol's strains,
While fierce the bitter wind foretold
A coming night of bitter cold.

The hour was late, the songs were o'er,
Another stranger sought the door,

And as his knockings shook the air,
Came the accustomed cry, "Who's there?"
For in these troubled times the name,
As well as whence the wanderer came,
Oft failed to find a sheltering roof,
With many a gentle stern reproof;
But ere the converse reached an end
The stranger answered back, "A friend."

The portal partly open swung,
Showing the inmates he was young;
Not boyish, for the eye could scan
The every feature of a man;
But young. His eboned eye, as bright
'As stars upon a wintry night,
Drank in the gleaming lights that pour
Their radiance through the open door,
That shot afar one glistening glow
'Across the frozen fields of snow.
While long the host eyed well with care
The stranger that stood waiting there.
The cap of silken otter skin,
Holding a wealth of warmth within,
Another time might tell the tale.
A hunter wandering through the vale.
But now, what hunter dared to climb
These frozen hills in wintertime,

When antlered stag, with fawn and doe,
Had sought the laureled glades below?
The buckskin coat, that hung with grace,
Claimed him a patron of the chase;
Where, when the deer ere swift it fled,
A startled truant, from its bed,
The faultless effort of his eyes
Had won this garment as a prize.
But the good host released his hold
And welcomed the stranger from the cold,
Who when he saw through portal wide
The gathering round the fireside
In meditation, yet he stayed
His foot as if some fear delayed,
While quick he measured well with care
Each face and feature gathered there.
But when the warmth swept from within
O'er his cold form, inviting him,
With cheerful smile and ready will
He stepped beyond the welcoming sill.

The inmates rose as in he came
And pressed an opening to the flame,
Where, when the host had closed the door
And buttoned down the latch once more,
With cautious grace the youth he eyed
Then drew the latch-string clear inside.

Quick to perceive with glancing eye,
The stranger smiled, then breathed a sigh,
But murmured in an undertone,
“Fear not, my friends; I am alone,—
Alone and weary; well you know
An evening’s journey through this snow
Will tire the best of feet that stray,
While mine have toiled since break of day.
The cold and bitter wind that blew,
Pierced my fur garments through and through,
And seeing from yon trackless waste
The light, I quickly turned in haste,
Where thinking that perhaps I might
Find shelter from the bitter night,
A courage pressed my firm desire,
Till here I stand before thy fire.”

The candor of the youth portrayed
Truth, by well-chosen words conveyed.
While the strange crowd, with searching eye,
Gazed with half awe, half sympathy.
“I bid you welcome, stranger, here
All are but friends, so have no fear,
Nor did I mean offence toward thee
By drawing in the latchstring free,
For here among these haunted hills,
Where lurk a thousand waiting ills,

We always think to well secure
Such ready access to the door.
Since you have journeyed long, you say,
And cold and bitter was the way,
Take comfort at our glowing flame,
And tell us of from whence you came."

The stranger took the proffered seat,
And laid his rifle at his feet.
Then with a sweeping glance he eyed
The cheerful room ere he replied.
High o'er the mantled fire-place
Hung many trophies of the chase;
Not such the fire-place, as allays
In tenement the sickly blaze,
But broad and ample, like instead,
Affords the yule-log bounteous bed.
Around the log-walls here and there,
Arranged with artful skill and care,
The spreading antlers of the deer
Held weapons that were ever near;
Nor had his vision failed to scan
Each flint with well-primed powder-pan.
Where hung suspended by a braid,
By far more gentle fingers made
With rustic effort to adorn,
The polished bison powder-horn.

Here for the last, a flightless thing,
The horned owl spread its dappled wing.
There the gray wolf and otter hide,
Dread enemies before they died,
Lay close companions, side by side.
And o'er the doorway, perched above
The glaring Eagle, hung the Dove,
Emblems of Peace and War, the hall
Gave, silent on its rustic wall,
Refuge in death, alike to all.

But quick to check the glancing eye
The stranger thus gave his reply:
"Most worthy host, you little know
The drifted depth of yonder snow ;
This bitter wind was still at home
Somewhere within the frigid zone,
Nor had it started south before
My feet forsook their native shore.
When dawn first touched the mountain-crest
High o'er Lake Racquet's frozen breast,
I sought the heavens where my eye,
Measured the promise of the sky,
And seeing the gorgeous glow of fire
That bathed each stalwart snow-capped spire,
I joyous started on my way
That turned to be this bitter day.

Nor little dreamed but that I might
Reach friends and comfort ere the night.
'Twas somewhere past the hour of noon
When last I spanned the frozen Schroon,
While from the west one heavy cloud
Swept o'er the mountains like a shroud;
Nor dared I then to wander back
O'er what was soon a pathless track.
So long as east my course I laid
I hoped to find some sheltering aid.
Each onward step gave fresh alarm;
I feared an ever-constant harm;
The very frozen hillsides moaned,
And stalwart trees bent low and groaned,
And now and then, with thundrous roar
That shook the earth from cliff to shore,
Some mighty monarch 'mid the storm
Tore from the rocks that held its form,
And yielding to the awful spell,
Crashed into splinters as it fell.
Nor dared I longer to remain
Unsheltered on the open plain,
For worse than wind and falling trees
My only hope was but to freeze.
So fierce the storm raged o'er the glen
The fox forsook its rocky den,
The partridge hovered in the snow,
The rabbit burrowed deep below,

And deer stood trembling by me there,
Fearless of me, but of the air
Their fear was pictured in their eyes,—
An intuition made them wise,
For when the mighty trees came down
From off the mountain's trembling crown,
They sought a small unbroken grove,
Nor could my presence make them move.”
While well the stranger's tale was told
Of trackless wastes, of bitter cold,
Without a howling tempest blew,
Marking the story more than true;
And stirred the dead and withered leaves
That long lay hidden 'neath the eaves.
And now and then, as if at play
The sweeping wind forsook its way,
And howling down the chimney came,
Filling the room with smoke and flame,
Where shuddered at the frightful gale
The anxious listeners to his tale.

The host replied: “But good desire
Led you, I hope, from food and fire;
Nor could I think thy words portend
But the true omen of a friend.
A bitter fate has sure been thine,
'Tis far beyond our hour to dine,

And after yours, if, as you say,
You've toiled through snow since break o' day.
But hunger finds no welcome here;
Warm your cold hands and wait with cheer,
For, though the night's repast is done,
Enough at least is left for one.
I know thy journey; oft before
I've chanced along that rugged shore,
Nor would I trust the precipice
On such a cruel day as this.
The lake is wholesome to the eye
Whose rocky shores ascend on high,
With many a rough and stubborn way
Too dangerous far to trust to-day.
But, stranger, since you've journeyed long,
What mighty mission pressed you on?
What tidings may thy coming bring?
How fare the subjects of the King?"

The careful youth had not replied,
When from the cheerful fireside
Le Clair arouse, and though the gale
More loudly howled its wintry tale,
With nervous care and anxious mind
He left the cheerful scene behind.
Yet scarce the latch was drawn before
An Indian maiden pressed the door,

Whose queenly form and step of grace,
And olive-darkened eye and face
Thus sweeping inward from the gale,
Might grace some wondrous fairy tale.
But when she saw the stranger's form,
Still snow-swept from the bitter storm,
She quickly stayed the step that soon
Sought shelter in another room.
While the good host with manly pride,
Laid his stiff-frozen furs aside.
Then called aloud; the maiden came
Quickly in answer to her name,
'And placed before the glowing fire
A feast to calm the youth's desire.
He thanked the host with faultless care,
Then sank into the proffered chair,
And with a more than ready zeal
Did ample justice to the meal.
"Good host, such journeys soon will right
The poorest of an appetite;
'And mine by fasting sorely tried
Is thankful to be satisfied."
'And oft Wewesa gave a smile
In waiting on the hunter, while
His animating words were fired
With thoughtful wisdom all admired.
His mind was bright, his reason strong,
His voice was low, and like a song

It seemed to fill the rustic room
With the rich cadence of a tune.
And on his brow each tangled curl
Might fire the envy of a girl.
Yet ne'er neglected ringlets rolled
Above a visage half so bold;
And ne'er a countenance so free
From lines of weak timidity.
His eye that sparkled 'neath the flame
That from the glowing embers came
Seeming with every searching view
To pierce each settler through and through.
Although a friend to pity's tear,
Was yet a stranger unto fear.

The feast was o'er. The youth replied,
As pressed each listener to his side:
"Most worthy host, thy question true
I scarce know how to answer you;
Nor would I care one thought to lend
That might thy kindness here offend.
For wisdom bids my tongue be bound
Where Whigs and Tories both are found.
Though when 'tis duty, then I swear
I speak, no matter when or where,
My honest mind, though naught should aid
That true conviction but my blade.

I only know oppression's hand
Sweeps with a vengeance through our land
That leaves upon each heart a scar,
While Justice loudly clamors, War!
A hundred vandals haunt each home
For the King's tax before 'tis grown,
That, should it dare but be refused,
The humbled sire is cursed, abused,
Or worse, rewarded for his pains
By dungeon doors or prison chains.
Nor is that yet his only crime,
For by his Edict, lately signed,
This King has set aside in rage
The land grants of a former age;
And with a more than heartless hand
Has swept the titles from the land
That lies far on the other side
For years New Hampshire's boasted pride.
This last decree, a sister's son,
A youth, just come from Bennington,
Reports, and fearlessly I deem,
He holds his word in high esteem.
But as the adage oft is said,
A silent tongue holds wisdom's head,
I scarce should say these words in fear,
'Tis thought some traitor harbors here.
'And lest my meaning might offend,
I speak, as would but speak, a friend.

You doubtless think but fool or foe
Would wander far in such a snow ;
Or that some mighty mission grave
Has pressed me on o'er hill and wave.
But thine the error. From the King
No heartless message do I bring ;
To serve a tyrant's hand I scorn,
And should I speak, I speak to warn.
The only mission, host, to-day,
That leads me on this bitter way,
Is but to roam the hills for game
And view the shores of Lake Champlain.
That now, I fear, I scarce may stride
In safety lest I have a guide."

When first the stranger's words portrayed,
The Edict that the King had made,
Now new to them, each settler sprang
Quick to his feet, while loudly rang
Defiant words from every one
That dared its execution done.
Then Vermont, who for long before
Silently sat beyond the door,
Rose to his feet, and paced the floor.
His face, though somewhat touched with age,
From burning ire looked young in rage.
With angered tread his mighty form
Shook the whole house above the storm

And showed by every trembling limb
An innate, unknown strength within.
“Defiant, back,” he cried, “I fling
The cruel insult to the King.
Despite the many hirelings, all
Behind Ticonderoga’s wall,
The songs of war shall rise from here
Above each cringing coward’s fear.
A King might grant the right to own
Those frozen hills I call my home,
Or by usurping hope to wave
Decrees long silenced by the grave;
But in a higher, nobler school
Is taught the precious right to rule,
The humbled slave, whose soul ne’er stirred
At thoughts of freedom, well might serve,
And even he will rise in time
When back the Tyrant gives but crime,
But blessed be he who dares alone
Stand guardian o’er his peaceful home,
And strikes with never-ceasing might
The tyrant who usurps that right.
Already do our settlers hear
Of Rolland Dale, Ye Mountaineer,
That dares rebuke this monarch’s claim
Along the shores from whence you came.
Here, gaze on this,” his statue tall,
Straight as a reed, turned to the wall;

“Gaze! ponder! read!” He pointed where
The King’s seal shone with crimson glare,
Where met the stranger’s staring eyes
A murderer’s offer for his prize.
As thus surveyed he, through his breast
There swept a tremor of unrest.
“Reward! A Thousand Pounds! Ye Head,
Of Rolland Dale!” and as he read
In anger Vermont stamped his heel
And pressed the taper to the seal
That soon beneath the smoky maze
Took up the taper’s flickering blaze.
Where as the singeing flames swept o’er
Quick they consigned it to the floor.
The word “Reward” first burnt from view,
The sputtering seal flashed quickly, too,
And Rolland Dale’s charred name burnt on,
But not until the King’s was gone,
And when upon the hearth of clay
The blackened sheet of carbon lay,
These words untarnished stood out clear
On the charred scroll, “Ye Mountaineer.”

“Stranger, a patience long outdone
Has turned each settler’s heart to stone,
And spread rebellion far away
From Champlain to Virginia.

But since to us you newly bring
The cruel Edict of the King,
That sweeps yon eastern shore with fear,
Know you the head he holds so dear?"

"Yes, friend, quite well, and though '*allied
With murder on the mountain-side,*'
As states this lying parchment here,
No innocent have cause to fear.
But woe the monarch's men who dare
To brave the tiger in his lair.
He dwells where pathless mountains lave
Their shadowed brows within the wave,
And where the rocky turrets rise
Like battle ramparts to the skies,
And towers to the starry glow
Each fancy-fashioned cupola;
Where but the Eagle dares to dwell,
There is his chosen arsenal.
And oft his followers essay
To wander from that rocky way,
Here to the eastward where they fling
Defiance to the very King;
Nor western lakes alone they claim
Unbidden guests to Lake Champlain.
This same strong band, another year,
Will haunt the very fort with fear.

But lest perchance some listening ear
More than is best might chance to hear,
A prudence bids me hesitate,
And simply tells thee patient wait."

Now with a more than lavish hand
The host renewed the dying brand;
As once again the sparkling tide
Of russet cider was supplied,
Turned now more reverent the gay
And silence held its peaceful sway.
But ere the thirsty stranger quaffed
From out the bowl the sparkling draught,
Each ear instinctive turned at once
To hearken to the stern response.
Who turning to the aged host,
Tipped the light offering with a toast.
He stood before the glowing blaze
Like sculptured pride of ancient days;
His hand upheld the ruddy stain,
Nor longer could his lips retain
The burden that his very soul
Implored their accents to extol.
As fabled God in mountain dell
Breathed forth the wondrous oracle,
While thousands at its sylvan shrine
Courtied that wisdom as divine;
So there it seemed each settler heard
The voice of God within each word.

THE TOAST.—TO THE BRAVE.

“To every heart that dares to brave
On mountain, valley, plain or wave,
Mankind’s oppression, and with zeal
Yearns to revoke that tyrant’s heel,
Oh, may some guardian angel stand,
When fierce the conflict sweeps the land,
Nor leave him in the bitter strife,
Doomed as a wretched slave through life.
Ennobled, may his arm sublime,
A deathless foe, through endless time,
Ripe for the conflict ever rise
Midst where his banner sweeps the skies;
And when at last the tyrant’s train
Yields on the field, or there is slain,
Kind be the fate that with applause
Rewards him and his noble cause.”

The hour was late, each heart enfired
To sleepless beds had long retired.
Out in the storm the wintry breeze
Howled doleful dirges through the trees,
Or swept with low and mournful wail,
O’er cliff and hill, through wood and vale.
The embered fire sank red and low
Where pictured in its dying glow,

'A thousand fancies seemed to play
'Twixt ash and coal, then flit away,
As if some genii in command
Beckoned them back to fancy land.
And as with steady thoughtful gaze
The stranger watched the dying maze,
Wewesa came and gently spread
Upon the floor a sumptuous bed.
The beaver's robe, the black bear's hide,
And panther's skin, a couch supplied,
And furs of otter, mink and deer
Spread freely that bespoke good cheer,
With foxes' pelt piled freely there
Supplied the pillow of his care;
Mingled together all unite
To furnish comfort for the night.
The maiden turned, "Stranger, I pray
But restful slumber thine till day.
Rest, from thy journey sore and lame,
And dream not of the antlered game,
Nor may one thought of fear annoy
To turn thy mind from slumber's joy;
For here before the embered fire
To-night a King would glad retire.
Dream not of trouble, lest before
Thy feet forsake our welcome shore,
That dream shall bring a double share;
Dream not of strife, dream not of care;

Nor dream of water, nor of fright;
Nor dream of evil foes,—Good-night.”

As turned the squaw to leave the room
The stranger's laughter woke the gloom:
“Sad import, maiden, dost thou deem
The omen of a fretful dream,
While my tired eyelids seek their ease
Free from such foolish fears as these.
Dost thou hold converse with a ghost
Or goblin fiend, like Mother Yost?
But stay a moment; ere you go
Much would a weary traveler know.
I see within thy sparkling eyes
A confidence I can but prize.
Of Mohawk lineage you sprung,
And as I speak thy mother tongue,
Change from the one so strange to you;
Speak the first language that you knew.”
With that the converse dropped with grace
To the soft whispers of her race.
“I am a stranger in this vale,
Driven to shelter by the gale;
My limbs are tired, my way is long;
My course is lost, my compass gone;
My friends are far, and hence to thee
I turn for aiding sympathy.

I passed Ticonderoga's wall
Just as I heard the bugle call.
So close upon the fort I fell
That I could see the sentinel.
I saw the gaping cannons' mouth,
Like wicked wounds, point north and south;
And watched the banner to the storm
Sweep o'er the northern bastion,
And wild upon the tempest float
Across the snow-clad frozen moat;
'Twas all my better self could do
To keep from jumping, leaping through
The sally port and boldly tear
The waving pennant down from there.
And long the rash act bid me stay
Till reason pressed me on my way.
When soon, though almost froze and blind,
Ticonderoga fell behind.
But when I turned to leave the lake
And sought the shelter of the brake,
I met a settler coming down
From off the mountain's mantled crown.
His face was hidden and his eye
He tried to shield in passing by;
'Twas useless, for I hailed him then
And asked him of a distant glen,
Which, as he thought I wished to know,
Lay dimly outlined through the snow.

Suspicion set my stubborn will,
I watched him as he turned the hill,
Then followed back and saw him clear
Enter the fort, and disappear.
And well the sentinel seemed aware
That he was more than welcome there.
Though time was precious, still to prove
My thoughts, I climbed the cliff above
And waited by my hour-glass
Until an hour had fully past;
Then changed my course, for well my eye
Had told me that he was a spy.
Wewesa, listen; 'tis as true
As is that I have trusted you.
When first I reached yon welcome door
I saw that self-same face once more.
He sat beside the glowing fire,
And when I came, I saw the ire
Of traitorous mischief in his face,
When soon he rose to leave the place,
Straightened his tall form to its height,
Looked at me stern, then said, 'Good-night.'
Can it but be for paltry prize
Our settlers turn from men to spies?
Or can it be as oft beguiled
He answers to a woman's wiles,
And blind to duty, dares to fall,
And falling, would betray us all?

I warn thee, maid, be not so blind;
Let no such villains know thy mind.
For when 'tis known, just such as they
Seek but a secret to betray,
In this I fear I've chided thee.
Wewesa, tell me who is he?
And who this strange Vermont, whose word
So late defiantly was heard
Outspoken for the cause, that rings
Like open treason to the King?"

The maid her head a moment hung
As if the stranger's meaning stung
Her very soul. "Think not," she cried,
"That I am with the first allied!
He is a Tory, who pretends,
Like all of them, to be our friends.
I simply know he lives near where
The fort stands guard: his name, Le Clair.
Last summer, in an awful storm,
I sought the fort in fear of harm.
The sentinel that barred my path
Had warped my mind to instant wrath,
When suddenly, more like a dream
Than aught of earth that she might seem,
A lovely maiden mid the din
Motioned him back and called me in.
Her uncle holds command within;

His name is Captain De La Place.
The maiden comes of gentle race,
For at the fort I overheard
Whispered by many a Highland guard
That far across the stormy wave
Her father fills a warrior's grave;
And well I eyed her like a slave,
For beauty such as hers I ween
Mid mortals scarce is ever seen;
Nor could I drive her from my mind—
She was both beautiful and kind.
But when the storm had all past by,
Leaving a rainbow in the sky,
I saw this same Le Clair escort
The maiden back into the fort.
To-night I thought I knew his face
When first he reached the fire-place,
But could not say, though, I was sure
Where I had met that frown before.
This man Vermont, unknown to me,
Came to the house but yesterday.”

The stranger heard the maiden's tale,
Then sought the ardor of the gale,
Nor one abating hope seemed nigh;
Wilder the raging storm swept by.
“Fierce is the night; by heaven's laws,
That very traitor to our cause

Will call a worthless murdering pack
Of plundering hirelings on my track.
And with the cunning of an elf
Guide the armed treacherous mob himself.
That well-made couch, so kind of thee,
Alas! is not, my friend, for me;
Those cheerful robes, spread down with care,
'Tis not my happy lot to share.
Though fierce the storm sweeps o'er the way,
My shelter doomed, I dare not stay.
May heaven's choicest gifts be thine,
As now this luckless fate is mine.
A thousand times I thank thee,—here!
Take in thy hand a souvenir.”
With that he thrust his hand within
The heavy belt of otter-skin
And clasped within her tender fold
A guinea of the purest gold.
Nor time was lost, but quickly tried
The garments that were laid aside,
Grasped his good rifle, primed its pan,
Gazed o'er the room and careful scanned
Each cherished spot as if to trace
A deathless memory of the place;
Folded his otter muffler on,
Blest the whole household and was gone.

Fierce howled the storm; the bitter gale
Sang through the trees with mournful wail
And hurled the snow in mighty drifts
Across his way like giant cliffs,
That ever changing mid the storm
Made the bold journey cold and long.
But food and warmth and rest of length
Had blessed his weary limbs with strength,
That oft forsook the frozen ground
With many an agile leap and bound,
And cleared the dangerous chasms steep
That lay like demons wide and deep;
Where far below, within its den
The panther's howl awoke the glen;
As if each dangerous stride, each stone,
That long its cushioned steps had known,
A raging hunger to appease
Might give uncertainty to ease,
While thus its wrath rose over all
And cause the wanderer to fall.
Yet safely higher on he passed
Defiant of the wintry blast,
Until full long the distance lay,
Between the home of Nathan Gray
'And where he sought high o'er the wave,
The shelter of a mountain cave.
The cavern moss, the flaxen lint,
Took the quick spark from off the flint,

That 'neath his breath dispelled the gloom,
Within the mountain's rocky room,
And answering a double prize,
Warmth to his limbs, light to his eyes,
It lit each rocky recess grand,
And wooed his eyes to fancy land.

At home, Wewesa sat alone
Close to the embered hearth of stone.
Nor would her mind to rest retire
But gazed intent upon the fire,
With head cast down as if she prayed
The stranger's step had been delayed.
Then fancy placed before her eyes,
A vivid scene of wild surprise
That quickly brought with magic sweep
To her all else of earth save sleep.
She saw Ticonderoga's wall
And heard the sentinel's loud call
Of "Halt!" demanding who comes there;
Then saw the tall form of Le Clair,
Pause at the threshold mid the din,
Answer with password and go in.
Nor this the end of her alarms,
She heard the bugle call to arms,
And trembled as she seemed to feel
The heavy tread; the clash of steel

Rang ceaselessly upon her ear
That chilled her very blood with fear;
And plainer mid the constant hum
She heard the tattoo of the drum,
When quick the portal opened wide,
And fifty soldiers swept outside.

As leaps the panther when with fear,
The fast approaching foe draws near,
And quickly crouches near the way,
Ready to spring or stand at bay,
So leaped Wewesa; as one crazed,
Her eye with latent anger blazed.
Nor longer silent could she bear
The scenes of fancy that were there.
The otter robe she firmly grasped
And bound it o'er her shoulders fast;
A poisoned arrow to her breast,
With fervent murmur, quickly pressed;
Then faced the terror of the gale
And swiftly took the stranger's trail,
Yet pausing often as she'd go
To cover up his tracks with snow.
A hundred times the wintry blast
Forced her to kneel until 'twas past;
Which only fed to anger's fire
A wrath that strengthened her desire.

Like one who thinks that he allays
The ardor of the angry blaze.
By dashing oil amid the maze,
So each unbaffled mountain glen,
Woke double strength to strive again;
But fire and food that were supplied
Had blest with strength the stranger's stride.
Where often up the rugged way
Her faltering feet were forced to stay,
The stranger's foot had met the steep
And cleared it with an agile leap.
And oft she sought the laurel's aid
Where steep the pathway left the glade.
In vain her cherished hope to warn
The stranger, for at last 'twas morn,
And long the bitter storm had fought
Between her and the one she sought,
And swept with every drifting blow,
Across his hidden path with snow.
Vain was it now to struggle on
Upon his track when tracks were gone.
But well she knew each mountain glade,
And well the journey was repaid,
For suddenly she halted where
One unlost footprint lingered there;
And saw the broken boughs piled where
Baffled in cumbersome desire
The flint had vainly sought the fire.

A moment o'er the track she whiled
Then raised her face to heaven and smiled.
Smiled; for before her very eye
Tossing its frontlet to the sky,
One mighty giant that she knew
Held for a time her searching view.
The rocky cliff, the vaulting dome
In other days had been her home,
And oft in other years than now,
Had sought the cavern near its brow,
Or from its rugged southern end
Watched the bold soaring hawk ascend.
The stunted trees and laurel wild
Had been her playmates when a child.
And with a many fancied tongue
Their voices to the gale had sung,
Or hushed to lend a silent ear
When paused for rest the chase tired deer.
Alone amid the mountain range,
Covered with snow, each scene seemed strange
Where deep beneath the glistening chain
Silent and snow-bound Lake Champlain
Lay in the distance far below
Like some broad pasture field of snow.
And half way to the other side,
Upon the cold lake's frozen tide
A lone wolf on its ice-bound breast,
Howled of a hunger that distressed.

That, rising, touched Wewesa's ear
To stir, to move, her heart with fear.
But soon the clouds passed swiftly by
And brighter visions swept the sky.
Where when at last the storm was done
High o'er the lingering clouds, the sun
Touched in the west, each flinty spire
That answering the flood of fire
Sent quickly back one blazen glow
Through each deep valley far below,
And lit a thousand domes that lay
Like marble turrets far away.
Where shot aloft each rocky head
When from the gale all else had fled
Rearing their stalwart snowy forms
Like sentinels lone amid the storm.

The midnight hour had passed away
Back at the home of Nathan Gray;
Within the hour-glass, the sand
Long waited the inverting hand
To start once more its silvery thread
Counting the moments as they fled.
Within no loitering guest stood guard
But slumber claimed its sweet reward.
Without, from far beyond the glen
A company of King George's men

Lead by Le Clair, with weary stride
Came climbing up the mountain-side,
Nor slack'd their pace until they stood
Deep in the shadow of the wood.
Long now they paused amid the gale
Hoping to capture Rolland Dale.
Around the house first sneaked Le Clair,
Assured that all were sleeping there,
He reached the outside stony floor,
That graced the kitchen's outer door
When loud the watch dog's savage tongue
A mighty wail of warning sung.
A muffled sound, a stifled yell,
Rang for an instant through the dell
As from a well-aimed bludgeon's blow
The dog sank prostrate in the snow;
A second only did he kneel
To plunge the polished blade of steel,
Then turned a cold remorseless eye
And vainly watched the victim die;
But lest the sound aroused within
He sought his waiting friends again,
For well they knew the mountaineer
Was one the worthiest foe might fear.
And thought it best to each retire
And trust the dangerous task to fire.
The woods a fagot soon supplied,
Scarce was the flaming torch applied

Than wild the sweeping tempest came
To fan the fury of the flame.
Borne from its fiery breath below,
The kindred logs took up the glow
Until the long dried flaxen sheaves
That formed the thatch roof o'er the eaves,
Ignited, when with fiery bound
The cruel flames swept round and round
And all aglow beneath them lay,
The blazing home of Nathan Gray.
Thus while the tempest in its wrath
Swept o'er a fire obstructed path
Incendiary blazes curled
And freedom's fagot fired the world.

Homeward Wewesa turned at last
And many a giant mountain passed,
But wary of the snow-swept way
Where many hidden dangers lay,
She sought the open woodland wide,
That lay above Lake Champlain's tide;
Through many a deep and pathless drift,
Round many an icebound mighty cliff,
While yet her eye drank in with care
Each scene of splendor that was there.
Along the lake and through the wood
Each fir stood decked with snowy hood,

Where 'neath their ladened boughs were seen
Their coats of everlasting green.
And high from off the mountain tall
Hung the cold, voiceless water fall,
Where when the wintry blast defied
The mountain's wild tumultuous tide,
Around its form a misty trail
Had frozen like a bridal veil,
And woven with a magic skill,
Garland and garment for the rill.
And now and then as drawing near,
Her step aroused the startled deer,
That from the brake with frontlet fair
Turned its spread nostrils to the air;
And wary of approaching foe,
It cleared each drifted mound of snow,
Leaped through the brambled brake and on
Into the forest, and was gone.

The maid had turned to view the sky
But startled at the sudden cry
Of—"Halt!" that broke upon her ear,
Shrank backward with an instant fear.
The mountains answered to the yell,
The owl rose upward from the dell;
'And high above the drifted snow,
Flying its pathless track, the crow,

Fled to a distant perch sedate
Cawing a warning to its mate.
And as the cliffs their echoes gave
By far less human than the grave,
Wild superstition lent its power
In that small fraction of an hour,
And myriad fancies gathered round
To claim the hoarse and heavy sound.
For who so foolish that would dare
To brave the storm and venture there?
Nor could one foe her mind recall
That ere had known that mountain tall
Unless some long dead savage chief
Who on the mountain came to grief
And dying friendless while he swore
Eternal vengeance on that shore,
Had risen from his resting place
To curse this remnant of his race.
'A second more and at the shout
The startled maiden turned about.
'A second, and the piercing eye
Made reason calm, bade terror fly.
Though the pursuing soldiers stood
Barring her pathway through the wood,
Their presence was by far more kind
Than fancied terrors of the mind;
One short, half broken breath she drew,
And calmness lit her eye anew.

The leader spoke: "Squaw, tell us, pray,
What brings you o'er this stormy way?
Thy presence here most tells a tale,—
A messenger to Rolland Dale.
Speak! tell the truth, or by yon pine,
These shackle bandages are thine!"
And quick the clanking chains he threw
Down at her very feet in view.
"Kind was thy star of fate. To-day
Where rose the home of Nathan Gray
A smouldering heap of ashes lies;
While heaven denied their prayers and cries,
Three, nor but three, escaped the men
Ne'er have the hounds pursued the game
More fierce, more faithfully than we
Have through this tempest tracked those three;
Long have we followed, nor in vain.
Think you the game shall fly again?
Come, Fountain, seize the shackle bands!
Gelespi, bind the wretch's hands!
For by yon mighty mountain high,
I'll force the devil to reply;
If nothing but the brand of fire
Will answer for my firm desire,
Then not a second shall detain
The lash, the shackles, or the flame!"

Had all the evil threats been tried,
Not one, like this, had touched her pride.
And quick a flush of anger rose
As fierce she gleamed upon her foes;
And like the tigress storms its cage
Her savage ire broke forth in rage.
“Back, villains! Back! The foot shall fail,
That dares to cross Wewesa’s trail.
Nor will her lips return but lies
To murderous hirelings, foes, and spies.
Tell thee the truth! The accursed ear
That pity’s cries refused to hear,
Might vain expect it to adorn.
Truth spurns such ears as thine with scorn.
I swear by yonder mountain range
Such to thine ears would sound but strange.
Cursed be thy shackle chains, and thee!
Thank God, Wewesa’s foot is free!
No shackle chain Wewesa knows
While yet life’s current feebly flows.
Defiant in thy face I fling
A thousand insults to the King.
Tell him his banner soon shall fall
Down from Ticonderoga’s wall,
And well its hirelings cringe in fear
Of savage chief, and mountaineer.
Tell him that murder stains his hands,
And cowards answer his commands;

For who but such, would dare to stay
A squaw, unfriendly, on her way,
With threats of more than torturing grief;
A prisoner to a plundering thief.
I tell thee now as freely down,
The water leaves yon mountain crown,
When in the spring a flood of rain,
Sweeps from its summit to the plain;
So be my blood as freely given,
As are those thunder showers of heaven,
Rather than that my foot shall go,
One step, a captive through this snow."

The instant thought turned wrath to ire
And set her very brain on fire.
A sudden anger seemed to blind
Each sense of reason in her mind.
For quick beneath the otter hide
She plucked the arrow from her side;
And quicker hovered in the air
Its venom'd point above Le Clair;
But ere the flint, descent had made,
By stronger hands her arm was staid.

Le Clair in anger grasped the dart
Then plunged it to the savage heart.
And the poor wretch exhausted fell
With fatal wound, with savage yell.

Each rugged glen took up the cry,
And wailed an echo to the sky,
As if the heartless cruel shock
Had brought to life each senseless rock,
That called at once to instant birth
The condemnation of the earth.
Each mountain cave, each granite crest
That lay far toward the burning west,
From vaulting cliff to vale beneath.
Wildly returned that cry of death.
While from their rocky throats ascend
A thousand shouts to be avenged,
Nor were their murderous tales all told,
Till long the corpse lay stiff and cold,
For when the cry of death arose
To where the eagle sought repose,
From off the mountain's lofty head
Its pinions to the air it spread,
And answered back Wewesa's wail
In endless screams o'er hill and vale,
That, mingled with her echoed cry,
Shook the bold earth from lake to sky.

'Tis noon, no longer darkness now,
Clouds far Mt. Marcy's lofty brow.
No longer now on mountain pine
The shadowed sun refused to shine,

But poured effulgently its light
To daze to dim the wanderer's sight.
Yet scarce the tempest ceased to rave,
Those sweeping sunbeams sought the cave,
And with a gorgeous glow of fire
Bathed every snow-capped stubborn spire
That held their glistening summits high
Like white volcanoes in the sky;
Where long within the endless blue
Was drowned the stranger's wandering view.
Each rocky way he well looked o'er
Then turned his footsteps to the shore
Where like a prisoner Lake Champlain
Lay icebound 'neath the rocky chain.
A moment from the mountain crown
He gazed beneath, then started down;
Where his keen eye beheld below
A prostrate body in the snow.
But distance that was yet too great
The murderous tale could not relate.
Now down the mountain's mantled side
He turned a quick uncertain stride;
But when he reached the vale beneath
And saw the crimson stain of death,
Then wild the anguish swept his brain
As he beheld Wewesa, slain.

Bent o'er the fallen he drew near,
Soothed her dark brow, then dropped a tear,
And pity and remorse combined
To swell the current of his mind.
Her face though pale seemed just as rife
With every attribute of life
'As when she welcomed him to stay,
Or blessed him "God speed" on his way;
But now beneath his sorrowing groan,
Lay cold and lifeless as a stone.
In vain beside the crimson stream,
He prayed it all might be a dream,
But the cold pulseless being there,
In silence that rebuked his prayer,
Gave, answering each pleading breath,
The cold sweet placid smile of death.
A moment o'er the corpse he stayed,
Bent low his head and silent prayed,
But raised his mighty arm on high
As if imploring from the sky,
A witness to the dreadful vow,
That swept a pallor o'er his brow.
Each ladened fir within the wood,
Snow mantled like an angel stood,
And far beyond his tear-dimmed sight,
The fields of snowy spotless white
Spread on o'er mountain, lake and glade,
Like spotless death-shrouds for the maid.

“O God!” he cried; “what cruel hand
Sweeps murder broadcast through the land?
Hear but one humble prayer from me.
Alone I kneel,—she is with thee,—
Alone beside her snowy bier,
For she is in heaven while I am here.
As sure a mercy as is thine,
So sure the avenging arm is mine.
But should the ruthless crimson flow,
By far too lavish vengeance know
Should heated anger but too far
Loose reason in the height of war,
Now to atone, this prayer I give,
Vengeance be mine; forgive, forgive!
But not prevent, for here I swear
By every sacred solemn prayer,
Each crimson drop that stains the snow,
Shall drain an hundred from the foe.
Rather my very foot shall fail
Than it forsake the murderous trail;
Rather a thousand times, my arm
Fall palsied, helpless, shorn of harm,
Than that my hand or foot forbear,
To seek the vengeance I forswear.
Grant but this prayer,” at last he cried,
“And Rolland Dale is satisfied.”

Vainly when rising he looked round,
From lake below to mountain crown.
And gazing cautious far and near,
Lent to his eye a listening ear,
As if some underlying vale
Might tell to him the murderous tale,
Or that some giant oak might know,
The villain's hand that dealt the blow,
And startled by the awful crime
Whisper its secret to the pine.
But still the mountains rose the same,
Nor vale nor valley breathed the name;
Each giant tree from cliff to shore,
Stood voiceless, silent as before,
Nor lent a murmur that portrayed
The heartless murder of the maid.

With many a blessing sent to heaven,
The last sad, simple rites were given;
High on a cliff, high o'er the wave,
Wewesa found a lonely grave,
Where tall the hemlock cast with gloom,
Its deathless branches o'er her tomb.
A moment by the tree he stood,
Cleared the rough bark from off the wood,
And oft the dagger went and came,
In carving in its heart her name,

And to this very day is seen
Carved 'neath its boughs of living green,
Deep sunken in that monarch's breast,
True friendship's last and noblest test.
Where reverent pauses many a guide,
While mingled pity, love and pride,
Lisps a soft prayer, or breathes a sigh,
Or wakes again the patriot's eye.

The orb of day fast sinking now
Behind the mountain's western brow,
Shot high its golden radiance full
Above each snow-capped pinnacle;
Each stalwart peak took up the gleam,
And answered back with fiery stream,
As if the varying lights were flung,
Like signals of an unknown tongue,
From cliff to cliff, from land to land,
That only mountains understand.
Where deep the clouds lay pillared on,
The far off distant horizon.
Nor could a master's hand prepare,
Such art, such glory, as was there.
For all along the northern sky,
The light of day began to die,
Where still the snow sought to illume,
Like giant ghosts from out the tomb,

Each monarch of the mountain chain,
That rose where day began to wane.
But in the east the day had fled
And deeper twilight lowered instead,
Nor one reflected sunbeam shone,
From off the vaulting peaks of stone
That rose beyond the sleepy tide,
Far on the distant other side.
Then one by one, the stars arose,
Dim flickering tapers in repose,
And climbing up the eastern sky,
One sheet of silver shot on high,
Above the cliffs to vanish soon,
Within the splendor of the moon;
Nor other visions followed on,
For night was there and day was gone.

* * * * *

TONGUE MOUNTAIN—LAKE GEORGE.

'Tis summer, and the evening breeze
Sighs mid a thousand verdant trees.
But when the sun sank in the west,
Across Lake George's crystal breast,
A last faint zephyr swept the tide
Where half way o'er the lake, it died.
Then peace and twilight hand in hand,
Settled o'er mountain, lake and strand.

And one by one, the stars on high,
Assumed their places in the sky,
To view their faces all aglow,
Mirrored within the lake below.
Here the tall mountains towered o'er,
Deep brambled marsh or rocky shore;
There the rude defile of the hill,
Where the wild rivulet or rill,
Long had a noisy mirth supplied
But that the summer's drouth denied.
While in its stead beneath the green
Rock, moss and fern, a feeble stream,
Through the dark defile trickled down,
From off the mountain's verdant crown,
To give its moisture to the brake,
And vanish ere it reached the lake.
Tall mountains down their shadows gave
To mingle darkly in the wave.
And not the owl was there to tell
Its mournful story to the dell,
But all of nature seemed subdued,
In restful peace and solitude.
Save as the tireless bat would swing
Throughout the night a noisy wing,
Or circling round the mountain spring,
This one lone guardian of the night,
Wasting the weary hours in flight,
Seemed to all other impulse blind,
Searching a loss it could not find.

Beneath Tongue Mountain all was still,
The moon crept slowly o'er the hill,
And slipped the fleecy clouds among,
That silent in mid heavens hung,
Like silver curtains to restrain,
A watchful vision's grateful claim,
Yet more to please than to refrain,
The bold ascending crescent proud,
Seemed alternating mid the cloud,
That now and then broke part in two,
And let a straying moonbeam through.
The lake caught up the sudden light,
And shot its beacon to the night.
So silent and so still it lay,
Beneath the calm reflected ray,
That every ripple on its breast,
Ceased murmuring and was at rest.
So still, it seemed no rippling wave,
Its rocky border ere might lave.
So still, no torrent's rumbling roar,
Or tempest's strife might wake its shore.
So calm the night, the lake so clear,
So pure the mountain atmosphere,
That every islet 'neath the glare,
Seemed set suspended in the air.
Whose drowsy shadows swept the tide
Or hovered in the lake beside,

Each straying beam that lent a glow
Of turquoise to the rocks below
While deep a faultless mirror gave
Their images within the wave.
Though naught that human eye or ear,
Other than peace might see or hear,
Bold rumor claimed, a nightly guard,
Tongue Mountain's rugged passes barred,
And ghastly gruesome yarns were told,
Of gatherings within its fold,
Till gossip's tongue had named the glen,
With many a harrowing tale, the Den.

'Twas midnight, and the summer's calm
Was fragrant with the woodland balm.
Nor sighing breeze awoke the pine
Along the skyward border line.
No noisy brook was there to chide,
The rocks with stubborn foamy tide.
Nor murmuring rivulet or rill
To call an echo from the hill.
But deep within the endless shade,
By spruce, and oak, and hemlock made,
The watchful eye and listening ear,
Of many a sturdy mountaineer,
Swept glen and mountain lake and moor
Or caught the ripple on the shore.

When from its crystal realm below
The perch leaped forth to shun the foe.
Not such was this a martialled train
To courtly glance, or favor vain.
Accustomed 'neath a tyrant's crown,
To soldier's curse and courtly frown,
Freedom had long their souls imbued
And made them, though in manner rude,
Slaves to a conscience servitude,—
A servitude whose greater part
Was buried deep within each heart.
Here stood the Saxon in his prime,
There the Alsatian, bent with time,
The merry Scots from bonnie Doon,
And Erin's weary exiled son.
Each from a different land had roved,
All unionized in hopes and love.
A murmur swept the defile's side,
As came a heavy, manly stride,
Down the rude rocks and stony heath
To the wild rendezvous beneath,
When suddenly a welcome shout,
From the long waiting guards rang out,
And thrice the glen its answer gave,
O'er cliff and mountain, lake and wave.

Up spoke the stalwart John Devoe:
"Late hast thou tarried with the foe.

Blest be thy step. Yon distant glen
Gives welcome shout to thee again."
For deep and low the glen replied,
With rumbling answer o'er the tide,
The echo from the other side.
"Lake George is guarded well. But why
That fiery impulse in thine eye?
All night the guards have been resigned
To watchful duty well defined.
From Prospect Mountain to Champlain,
A hawk-like vision guards the chain.
Hark! In yon mountain's distant dell
Sounds the night watch, and all is well.
He halts some settler that has strayed
Perhaps in yon seclusion's glade.
And yet 'tis best that I should go,
For likely 'tis a secret foe."
Thrice now the echoes rise and fall
In answer to the guardsmen's call,
And thrice the cliffs seem to awake
And shout challenge to the lake,
To die upon the distant wave,
When all grew silent as the grave.
"Stay! For no time, my faithful men,
To-night I linger in the Glen.
Is there a boat upon the shore?"
"There is, and ready lies the oar."

And scarce the sturdy guard replied
A boat was tossed upon the tide.
"Comrades, my story will be short.
Devoe, be ready to depart.
Strife reigns in Boston, where the sea
Rolls tainted with unwholesome tea;
Ticonderoga, so they say,
Strengthens its garrison to-day;
A youth who scouted near that fort,
A fortnight gone without report;
I fear some treacherous decoy
Has lured the footsteps of the boy,
Who, now rewarded for his pains,
Lies languishing in prison chains.
To-night I venture to explore
The mountains on yon eastern shore,
Where ne'er my footsteps trod before,
'And search ere my return that strand,
'Alone! Vermont, assume command;
'Ask not the reason why alone.
Speed to the oar, guard every stone,
Watch every pass from shore to sky,
'And keep these vales with care. Good-bye."

Devoe applied the ready blade,
The boat shot outward from the glade,
Straight o'er the lake as could the wing
Of startled mountain pheasant swing,

Save when its shoalest depths were neared,
To shun the rocky isles, they veered.
Faint grew the ripple in the tide,
And fainter still the hills replied,
Till, to the watchers in the west,
No murmur crept across its breast,
Save now and then the swishing oar
Re-echoed from the distant shore.
In vain the watchful eye might claim,
To follow further o'er the main,
Stronger it seemed each moonbeam tried,
With silvery fire to burn the tide,
Where, leading in the foamy brake,
A wavering speck moved o'er the lake.
Northward, Black Mountain reared its height
Like the lone sentinel of night .
Far to the east in distance rose
Tall Sleeping Beauty in repose,
And Shelving Mountain closer lay,
Where many a fancy winding bay
Down at its feet caressed the hill,
While loudly sang its mountain-rill.
Yet scarce was touched the rocky strand,
The hero bounded to the land,
And, climbing up the distant dell,
His comrades heard him shout "Farewell!"
And answered back with "All is well."

CANTO II.
LAKE GEORGE.





CANTO II.

LAKE GEORGE.

The shades of night still lingered o'er
Lake George's broad but waveless shore,
Where, when the harvest moon arose,
Each ripple sank in calm repose.
But when the morning star on high
Like a lone taper in the sky,
Cast from the east a feeble ray,
To vanish with the blush of day,
A sturdy mountaineer appeared
Through the tall, blooming thorn, that reared
Its tangled arms and offspring rank
Along Lake George's verdant bank.
Each nettled briar that chanced to hedge
His way toward the water's edge
Sank 'neath his foot where thorns opposed,
Quick to the work his dagger rose,
Until at last the lake resounds
His heavy tread, as forth he bounds,
And, waiting till the echo died,
Kneeling, he drank from out the tide.

Rising, he paused, and with a glance,
Measured the distant broad expanse.
His eye no such a vision knew:
So wild the scene, so grand the view.
For Nature, with exhausting skill,
Had carved each valley, dale, and hill,
And placed its tenderest touches down
In finishing the mountain crown,
Long ere complete the world was done,
And started on its course, the Sun;
The inspecting angels, God's envoy,
Gazed on this lake and wept with joy.
For here the peaks were upward hurled
As if they sought to leave the world,
By piercing through the very sky,
To join some planet up on high.
Each spire, majestic in the chain,
Rose like a giant from the plain.
And cast its shadows, lingering,
Like sways the sceptre of a king.
Each underlying hill and vale,
Like terraced guards where foes assail,
Rose boldly from the earth below,
As if they first might try the foe.
And deep within the heart of all,
Embossed with rill and water-fall,
Like a rich mirror at their feet,
The broad lake spread its waveless sheet.

But when the slumbering world awoke,
And daylight o'er the mountain broke,
Each crystal crag took up the gay
Reflection of the coming day,
That fired their sun-lit helmets there
Like burning mountains in the air.
Each ragged cliff, each shady vale,
Fit scene for fancied fairy tale,
That gleamed before his wistful eyes,
Charmed him to utter mute surprise.
Until the sun, whose parting ray,
Last kissed the lake at close of day,
Peeped o'er the distant hilltops, when
A flood of fire poured down the Glen.

He seemed a hunter. From his form
Hung the broad strap, with powder-horn,
While with a careless air he toys
The flint-lock partner of his joys,—
A hunter who had lost his way,
Chancing amid these hills to stray.
For tangled paths that enter here,
Unknown save to the fox and deer,
Are solved by chance; each rugged hill
And wooded vale lay pathless still.
The cautious glance, the wandering view,
Wondering what course he best pursue,

Marked him a stranger, while his style
Showed he had wandered many a mile.

Long stood the stranger on the brink,
Where, loitering, he had paused to drink,
And gazed with an admiring eye
O'er pathless peaks, and cloudless sky;
And watched the woodland songsters take
Their morning baths along the lake.
Each verdant vale partook the hue
Of purple, where wild violets grew.
The hawthorn graced a sylvan bower;
The dogwood spread its snowy flower;
The honeysuckle's midget bloom
Ladened the air with rich perfume;
And the wild rose, with briary stem
Of myriad thorns, hung o'er the Glen
As if, in seeking to atone
That curse of nature, trailed alone,
Along the rocky hillside, doomed
To penance of an endless bloom.
So long he stood and careful eyed
Each stubborn peak, each mountain-side,
As if from them he sought to find
Which the most taskless path to climb,
And sighed when last he failed to view
One solitary scene he knew.

But when he started up the strand,
Exhausted nature's stern demand
Each sinewy limb began to feel,
As faltering he prepared the meal,
And struck his flint beside a brook
That gurgled from a mountain nook,
Where cavern moss had overgrown
Rocks that the sunlight ne'er had known,
Each tiny alcove deep within
Were now as they had always been,
Nor had their grottos been the prize
To other than the lizard's eyes,
While o'er them towered a sturdy oak,
Half shattered from the lightning's stroke,
That in some wild, tumultuous hour
Had fought the storm, had shook with power;
Nor yielded till the fiery blast
Had laid its shivering scars at last.
But still defiant, yet it stood
Touched with a former hardihood.
Half dead, half green, the sleepy glade
Received alike its broken shade.
High on the topmost branches, where
Playful, a squirrel sat poised in air.
The ready gun came quick to aim:
The bead fell sure upon the game:
And, while the echoing hills resound,
Lifeless the squirrel came tumbling down;

When, lo! before his very eyes
An antlered stag and doe arise
From out their lair; and with one leap
Cleared the broad, heathery caverns deep;
And, while the shattered branches fell,
Their clattering hoofs aroused the dell.

Long ere the frugal feast was o'er
The sun had sought the western shore,
Where 'neath the towering pines sedate
The whippoorwill called to its mate,
And where the evening shadows still
Noiselessly crept from off the hill.
For slumber had become his guest
And wooed his weary limbs to rest.
And with each strengthening breath that came
Visions of joy ran through his brain.
He saw his home; he stepped once more
Beneath his own vine-covered door;
His gentle mother seemed to stand,
And 'neath her soft caressing hand,
Each weary care, each haunting dread,
Like self-convicted demons, fled.
But when at last with strength he rose
And cleared the shatters from his clothes,
Then cast a searching glance around
Over his bed upon the ground,

He saw that 'mid the idle dream
His powder-horn besought the stream;
That while he slept had drank its fill
From out the noisy mountain rill.
Thus now he mused, as there he eyed
Its polished profile in the tide:
"What thoughtlessness at times will make
An irreparable mistake!
Misfortune is assured to wait
A certain guest at folly's gate;
And yet, not idly shall be borne
This burden of a powder-horn.
Deceitful friend! since now you dare
Expose me to the danger here,
And court acquaintance of the rill,
Drink, faithless gormand, drink thy fill,
That I when mountain-tired may drain,
And curse my folly o'er again!"
A moment o'er the brook he whiled,
Then raised the dripping horn and smiled,—
Smiled, but then sighed, for he must stray
Unarmed along the dangerous way,
Save where his otter belt beneath
Exposed the dagger in its sheath;
But, ere he left, he turned to view
The mountains, lake, and hills anew,
As if his loss were well repaid
By food and slumber while he stayed.

And still he fain would linger when
He turned his footsteps from the Glen.
But now alone, a prize to all
The heartless woes that might befall
A wanderer in a savage land,
Armed with a burden in his hand,
Added sore effort to delay
Where long and lonely was the way.

Thus now communed he with himself:
"High on yon mountain's rocky shelf
Till night has fallen, ere I take
My course along the guarded lake,
I'll chance my foot, though more of bliss
No spot of earth can boast than this.
As foolish as an infant's play
Was thus for me to pass the day
In sleep. My harmless weapon swings
The reward that folly always brings.
I'll climb to cover, and no more
Trust slumber on the open shore."
He cast an upward glance on high
Along the border of the sky,
Beyond the distant mountain chain,
And then resumed his thoughtful strain:
"Yon sun is sinking in the west,
The songster seeks its bower to rest,

And down the eagle drops from flight
To settle on the crag for night;
While far within the sleepy dell
The hoot-owl tolls a mournful knell.
I'll mount yon promontory, where
An hour the sun yet lingers there,
And let a watchful eye survey
The mountains and unchosen way."
And scarce his thought became his will,
He left the lake and climbed the hill.

Few were the feet that ere had trod
These mountain paths, this virgin sod.
When half way up the mountain-side
He thought his very hearing lied,
Or that, since luckless fate befell,
Imagination cast a spell.
But no, for from above was heard
The accent of excited word.
"How now?" he faltered. "Woe betide
The fate that brought me to this side!
Who would have thought that soldiers here
Were scouting for the mountaineer?
And all these vantage points that rise
Are breastworks for unfriendly spies,
Till the poor hunter, unaware,
Stalks headlong in the ready snare?"

Yet worse, retreat is now too late;
My only hope a friendly fate:
And steady nerves, and ready blade,
If need be, are my only aid.”
While thus he planned designs anew
The boisterous soldiers came in view;
And while their mountain course they take,
With eye alert, and ear awake,
The hunter marked each dreaded word
Of converse that was overheard.

“I swear, Gelespie, he will die!
I saw the death-stare in his eye,
And watched the life-blood leave the hill,
Fast flowing in a crimson rill.”
“Hush, Fountain, hush! No savage life
Is worth the danger of the strife.
E’en though a boy, each arrow-head
Bears venom of the deepest dread.
My orders are to find and slay.
No quarters on the mountain-way;
And more especially to those
We long suspect as being foes.
We are ——” abrupt the sentence closed.
A demon by such words aroused,
The hunter, with his blade in air,
Sprang struggling between the pair.

His angered shout was backward borne
Like rolls the thunder 'mid the storm.
Beneath the cliff and o'er the lake,
Each frightened songster sought the brake.
Where the slow stork forsook the stream
And echoed loud the eagle's scream.
As if, from out the very sky,
It strove to waken with its cry
Each sleepy cliff, each drowsy rill,
To view the combat on the hill.
They closed in deadly strife. The clang
Among the mountain caverns rang
And echoed back with rage. The stain
Of blood fell free as summer's rain
'Neath where the dagger sought the strife,
Now crimson with the stream of life.
Each mountain torrent seemed in peace
To bid its rumbling waters cease.
So heavy came the panting breath,
So fierce the conflict fought with death,
That mountain rills could not compare
With war's tumult that shook the air.
From out each underlying glen
The frightened fox forsook its den,
And fled away more swift in fear
Than if the bellowing hounds were near;
And high o'er all the eagle spread
Its circling pinions o'er each head;

Nor would it seek the mountain tame
When man took up its favorite game,
But gave, as if by right alone,
A scream to cheer the conflict on.
In vain did struggling hands essay
To check the battle's dangerous way,
That breathless sought the very edge
Of a bold, towering rocky ledge,
Where 'neath a hundred feet the wave
Offered to all a welcome grave.
But justice, hope, and love aspired
To keep the hunter's strength enfired,
Who fiercely grasped one victim where,
Foaming and black, he gasped for air.
But when as pressed each struggling fiend,
Where fierce the yawning cavern gleamed,
The youth, exhausted, scarce could stand,—
Life's current failed his trembling hand.
As eyes grow dim, as senses reel,
He drops the polished blade of steel.
But fate her just decree had made,
For when Fountain leaped for the blade,
His footing erred, and with a yell,
Over the towering cliff he fell;
When from below there came a sound
That seemed to shake the very ground,—
A distant echo through the glen,—
And all grew calm and still again.

The stream of life had ebbed until,
Breathless they both besought the hill,
That from exhaustion freely gave
A rest as peaceful as the grave.
Each heavy, long-drawn breath that came
Seemed to possess no vital flame,
But now refused its strength to lend,
More like a foe than like a friend.
Each drowsy lid, each glassy eye,
With vacant longings sought the sky,
Or rested on the distant shore
As if their visioned joys were o'er.
But ere the hunter's strength returned,
While flaming thirst within him burned,
He prayed for water, and anon
Thought of the luckless powder-horn
That had been flooded by the stream
While he enjoyed his mid-day dream.
From 'neath his coat he swung it round
And shook it. At the very sound
His heart arose; with trembling hand,
Cleared of the battle's mire and sand,
He lifted it, and on the steep
Pressed to his lips, drank long and deep.

The strife was o'er, the deed was done,
And might had lost, and right had won.

Each torrent that had seemed to pause
Broke o'er his ear with loud applause.
The eagle screamed, as if the sight
Dared its fierce talons to their might;
And sweeping fled o'er rocky dome
To seek a conflict of its own;
And through each wooded hill and vale
The blushing robin told its tale;
Yet scarce the eye resumed its fire
Than banished was his former ire;
And hope and pity both returned
Where fiercest fires of anger burned.
He thought of him who hapless fell
Down in the far-off distant dell,
And straightway went to offer aid
Where the exhausted foeman laid.
But human hand could not o'ercome
The work a giant grasp had done;
The powder-horn was not imbued
With strength to turn life's ebbing flood.
He gave him drink. But when his eye
Saw that the sufferer's end was nigh,
Each thought of anger passed away.
Kneeling to hear what he might say,
He bent to raise the victim's head;
'Twas useless, for the wretch was dead.
Thus at that moment he espied
His foeman kneeling as he died.

Touched with remorse, the hunter rose.
Where fate had vanquished both his foes,
As if his hands might yet atone,
He made an humble grave of stone,
Where by the rocky tomb there laid
Close to the ledge, the bloody blade,
And a half-empty powder-flask:
The lone reward for dangerous task.
But ere he left the conflict's scene
He viewed the rugged vales between:
Each crag beneath, each rock unkind,
Brought thankful thoughts before his mind,
Where far beneath his foeman lay,
A fragment, on the rocky way.
At last he reached the rocky shore,
And all his dire fatigue seemed o'er,
As mirror-like, the waters wide,
Welcomed his form within the tide.
Each weary limb that faltered when
His exhausted footsteps reached the glen
Soon gathered strength; each pallid trace
Of battle vanished from his face.
Like some parched flower when the rain
Wakes it to beauty once again,
The youthful bloom began to glow
Upon his ashen cheeks of snow;
But time alone denied his stay,
And pressed him onward o'er the way

That shunned the steep with effort sore,
And sought the broad lake's level shore;
Where the tall mountains met his view,
Dressed in their garbs of sable hue.
Each glen, that like a paradise,
His onward step failed to entice,
Where deep the moss-grown vales within
And babbling brooks invited him,
Spread to his sight a vision kind,
That, all unheeded, fell behind.
But when at last his watchful eye
Greeted a cataract on high,
That from the mountain's lofty crown
A roaring veil of mist poured down,
His very soul seemed to arise
And welcome the vision to his eyes.

Thus mused he as he paused to cast
One lingering vision for the last:
"What food for fancy now were here;
Within yon covert hides the deer;
From yonder precipice on high
The watchful hunter sweeps his eye,
Then winds his horn; the echo shrill
Calls through the startled twilight, still,
His hounds, astray upon the hill.
Up starts the frightened stag; away
It speeds along that mountain way,

Now shuns the brake with haughty air
To clear yon brambled bower fair,
With limbs alert and head in air.
'Neath yonder cliff the anxious pack
Takes up the freshly-scented track,
And answering the leader's wail,
A mingled chorus haunts the trail.
Yon rampart shortly bars the course,
But hark! the leader baying hoarse,
The rugged brooklet scarce is crossed,—
The song has ceased, the trail is lost.
O'er yonder cliff the hunter stands
And shades his vision with his hands.
Close eye he casts; with joy he notes
Again the music of their throats,
And hears the echoes backward shout
The story of the chase and rout.
Now the fleet stag forsakes the vale;
Now turns off from the mountain trail;
Now flies along yon verdant bank;
And now, to cool its fevered flank,
Where naught might scented turf pursue,
To baffle hounds and hunter, too,
It plunges in the narrow bay
That underneath his vision lay.
So close, the dangerous antlers lave
Their spreading arms within the wave.

So close, one fleeting glance reveals
The secret that each maid conceals
When time has borne her on its tide
Beyond that state of woman's pride.
Already with a hoarser sound
The echoing, horny hoofs resound.
Already, for a faultless aim
Fresh primes his weapon for the game.
It comes; 'tis done; the monarch fleet
Sinks wounded at his very feet,
And, realizing his desire,
Beholds the antlered prize expire."

"But ah! in vain might fancy seem
The folly of a fretful dream,
(For mine, the drowsy sluggard's part)
Nor other than a dream impart
The favored chase, except to those
Awake and ready for the close.
'Tis strange no savage footsteps strayed
While yet I slumbered in yon glade.
'Tis strange no chieftain sought that bower
To rest him of the heated hour!
And chance, and fate, seemed both designed
To guard that couch where I reclined.
Enough! No more shall shadow way
Entice to slumber of the day.

No more, unarmed along the path,
Exposed to every woe and wrath,
That might befall a wanderer here.
But hark! Some fortress must be near.
Unless my very ears belie,
Some bivouac of the foe is nigh.
Some stronghold that like foxes' den
Lies hidden in this wildered glen.
This time a wretched fate is spared,
And I am better far prepared.
But still more caution must I know
Lest I bestir the anxious foe
That guards above or rests below."
With that he shunned the twilight's glare;
With that he chose each step with care;
With that he cast a searching view,
And primed his rifle pan anew,
Then paused to bend a cautious ear
To catch the ripple that drew near.

The western sun, fast sinking now,
Beneath the mountain's lofty brow,
Touched with delight each flinty spire
That answered back with floods of fire.
Each pathless cliff that towered nigh
Drank the rich halo from the sky,
And cast a golden wave o'er all
Resplendent to the water-fall.

That rumbled in the distant vale,
Mist-covered, like a bridal veil.
What artless, soulless eye might dare
To shun a vision half so fair,
Though foes assail, as sweeps the way,
The fleeting eye would plead to stay.
Now wakes the paddle's measured stroke,
Now breaks the ripple on the rock,
As swiftly glides to instant view,
Adown the lake, a birch canoe.
The glittering blade that caught the light,
Showed skillful hands, showed practised might.
And as the shallop shot along,
Forth in sweet voluntary song
The gentle oarsman was heard.
Nor carol of the woodland bird
Had e'er so charmed the leafy dell,
Where now its echoes rose and fell.
It was a maiden: And alone
She sang with soft bewitching tone.
The feathered wanderers of the wing
In jealous whispers heard her sing.
No instrument with martial chime,
Or tender symphony, gave time;
But as the waters glided by,
Pressed on by swift agility,
The murmur of a canting swell
Filled up each broken interval.

Nor lute in its divinest mood
 Is with more laughing strains imbued.
 Thus, sweeping far beyond the lake,
 Floated the song o'er hill and brake,
 Until it hovered in the air
 Like vespers round some angel's prayer:

BIRD SONG—TWILIGHT.

How enchanting to hear, as the twilight is falling,
 That hour that subdues the wild spirits of men.
 The shrill whippoorwill, to its truant mate calling,
 And answers the thrush, from the brush, in the
 glen:

“Twilight! Good night!”

At eve, as it wafts o'er the shore in the gloaming,
 While sweethearts are fervently plighting their
 vows,
 The breeze, through the trees, is a love ditty
 crooning,
 And plain can be heard, from a bird, in the
 boughs:

“Twilight! Good night!”

The singing ceased. From tree to tree
 The birds took up the revelry.
 Wilder they sang; it seemed a thrill
 Of rich vibrations charmed the hill.

Nor ceased until a sudden scream
Disturbed the revel of the dream,
For ere the boat had reached the shore
Where Shelving Mountain's torrents pour,
The shallop with a fearful shock
Collided with half-hidden rock.
And ere it trembling downward sank
The maiden leaped upon the bank.

She stooped an instant, then she eyed
The foundered boat within the tide;
And then, while brooding thoughts disclose
A thousand dreaded ills, arose.
She stood there trembling on the brink
As if, 'twixt heaven and earth, the link:
Yet to her lovely face seemed given
Much less of earth, much more of heaven.
Her rosy cheeks that well might scorn,
The pinkest blushes of the morn,
Swept further back the crimson fair,
In blended beauty 'neath her hair.
Her form, as stately as the swan,
Coaxing the eye to look upon,
Rose to the throbbings of emotion,
As deep and boundless as the ocean;
Emotion that but ill concealed
The beauty that each glance revealed.

Yet well, the inward rushing tide
Had swift agility defied,
Save that one foot that chanced to stay
A second 'neath the angry spray.
That as the maiden quick withdrew
The injured skirt o'er dampened shoe
Exposed an ankle arched and trim
As ever graced a fairy's limb.
Thus, fairy-like, with sweetest grace
The golden curls half hid her face;
The broken coiffure of her hair,
A revolutionist to care
That lay, her tidy feet between,
Gave beauty to disorder's mien.
She stood, a picture, by the brook,
With downcast eye and saddened look
Like some angelic dream that's given,
Unknown to earth, scarce known to heaven;
Whose heaving breast, whose azure eye
Strangers seem both to tear or sigh.
But when that fleeting glance she gave
Where lay the boat within the wave,
A cloud of sorrow swept her brow
That ne'er had rested there till now.
For sad her lot to view the end
Of her first love—her birchen friend,—
With many a pathless hill to roam
Between there and her distant home.

Like lightning in its vivid wrath
Lights up the beauty of the path;
Like rainbow over mountain-side,
So gleamed her eye o'er stricken pride.
A thousand thoughts ran through her mind;
A thousand dreads arose unkind;
A thousand woes besought the tear,
While not a single hope drew near.
The sun, now hidden in the west,
Forsook the tallest mountain crest,
Across the slumbering waters wide,
Where fled the ebbing eventide,
And o'er the lake that calm repose
That only summer twilight knows,
With breathless, noiseless shadows fell
To hush each songster of the dell.
Each dead, limb-naked, fir that stood
Deep in the shadow of the wood,
Assumed some weird contorted form,
Like towering ghosts that brooded harm.
And rocky cliffs of subtle gray
Rose like huge walls to bar her way,
Where, far across the hazy glen,
The panther growled within its den,
And higher on the mountain-side
The wildcat like a baby cried.
Nor sounds less grewsome woke the air
Along the pathless mountain there,

Save when the wailing dove alone
Mourned for a dove that long had flown.
But when despair had raised the tear,
A step approaching met her ear,
That every woe thrice multiplied,
As came the hunter up the tide.

The hunter paused ; his eye had ne'er
Beheld a vision half so fair.
The cataract had lost its charm
Within that maiden's sweet alarm.
His strong but fearless arm, that spoke
Direction to unerring stroke,
Trembled. He scarce could understand
Why swayed the rifle in his hand.
The faultless eye of errless aim,
That ne'er had failed on foe or game,
With manly glances caught her gaze,
Then wandered to the mountain maze.
And, as his rapid step he stayed,
With faltering words addressed the maid.
By the dim vestage of the day
That lit the night-imprisoned way,
Well from appearance might his age
Deceive the judgment of a sage ;
For not one wrinkled line of care
Or sorrow paid it homage there.

Each glance, with friendship's pure intent,
Exposed a vein of merriment,
Held backward in the strong control
And impulse of a noble soul;
And yet its presence all the while
Of converse wreathed a winning smile:

"Thy pardon, my fair maid, I pray,
Can I but aid thee anyway?
I saw thy boat, and watched the stream
Of twilight from the paddle gleam,
But dreamed not, ere it reached the shore,
So fair a helmsman swept the oar.
I watched the silvery waters glide
Along the canoe's polished side.
But when I heard yon rocky crest
With tearing vengeance rend its breast,
And saw the quivering shell rebound,
Ere in the lake it settled down,
I forward pressed in anxious speed,
Thinking my aid might be of need;
Nor slacked my rapid pace until
Thy foot in safety pressed this hill."

"Thanks for thy care," with accent shy
The startled maiden made reply.
Cold was the welcome that she gave
As paused the youth beside the wave.

But when he lifted to her side
The wounded boat from out the tide,
Each feature, ere a smile arose,
Was blushed with crimson like the rose.
The frown that o'er her lovely brow
Had cast a shadow until now,
From off her sunny features fled,
And left but thankful smiles instead.
A laughing eye, a merry smile,
Were cast upon the hunter while
He kneeled, and more than closely scanned
The wounded boat upon the strand.
But when he turned to let her know
The mendless damage of the blow,
His very soul seemed to arise
To meet her soft, inquiring eyes.

Sweet lips compressed in sorrowing frame,
Now parted as the accents came.
"Oh, sir; what luckless fate be mine!
When first yon stalwart mountain pine
Was bathed in floods of fiery hue,
I started in that light canoe
To view this cataract and dell,
Of which so many hunters tell.
But hours loitered by the shore,
Belated, the oft-idle oar,

I little dreamed that ere the sun
His royal course of day had run,
My birchen boat should fall the prize
Of unseen demons that arise
With cruel heads from out each cave
That slumbers underneath this wave.
I little dreamed my fragile friend,
Torn by a rock should find its end
Within the lake. That when 'twas o'er
Would cast me here on this lone shore.
Nor dreamed I once, until 'twas past,
That time had hurried on so fast;
But by determination pressed
Refused the plying paddle rest
Until my eyes, by effort tried,
Had feasted and were satisfied."

"Ah! sigh not maiden; bear in mind
Fate might have been to thee less kind.
A dangerous plunge within the wave,
Or, sadder still, a watery grave.
These might have been, but chance forebore
The wreck should be far from the shore.
As strange, my maid, these scenes to me
As is yon foaming stream to thee.
I ne'er have trod this lonely tract
Where leaps yon roaring cataract.

Simply a hunter, wandering here,
Searching alone but for the deer
Where yonder water-fall supplies
A wholesome concert to the eyes.
But when the crimson dawn of day
Broke o'er the rugged mountain way,
I little thought to offer aid
To one so fair, my luckless maid.
Though strange these scenes, my lot has been
Far from the hamlet's ceaseless din.
I feel, when on the mountain range,
At home alone where scenes are strange.
But 'mid these friendless mountains here,
Where the fierce panther crouches near,
Ne'er would these azure eyes of thine
Wake from the sleep they here might find.
If not my friendship you disdain,
Name but the land from whence you came,
And ere yon sinking sun goes down
Again beneath the mountain crown
Safely thy hand shall draw once more
With joy the latch-string of thy door.
Might I the dangerous way defend?
Might I presume to be thy friend,
Then shall my hand each danger brave,
As sure as yonder lies the wave.
These pathless hills are fraught with pain,
And fierce the wolf prowls o'er the plain ;

And darkness hides the moon from thee.
So place thy trembling trust in me.
As in the uncouth ocean shell
The rarest, purest pearl may dwell,
So in this rugged breast may hide
A true heart 'neath this rough outside."

At first the maiden's thoughtful glance
Sought the tall mountain's broad expanse,
But when with fervent vow he swore
To guide her safely to her door,
She gazed upon each feature fair
And read but honest purpose there.
No such a smile could be a cheat,
Nor lips so stern could voice deceit.
Dishonest purposes don't crown
With honest blush such cheeks of brown.
His eye, that sparkled with the fire
Of sympathy's sincere desire,
'Neath searching glances stood the test,
And drove each terror from her breast.
And when he asked to be her guide
Along the mountain's pathless side,
And said, "Trust me," she felt the thrill
Of truth, and, answering, said, "I will."

"Oh, sir; how can I ere repay
Thy kindness offered me to-day?

I hear of late that through each glen
Roam Rolland Dale's fierce mountain men—
A heartless chief, a cruel foe,
That fill each captive's lot with woe.
Within my boat, I had no fear
To venture o'er the waters here.
For strong the hand that ever gave
A swifter paddle to the wave.
But now, cast helpless on this strand,
I fear this mountain chieftain's band.
In murderous riot o'er each hill
They sweep yon western shore at will,
And venture here to boldly fling
Their open insults to the King;
Nor could thy worthy gun avail
'Gainst the fierce horde of Rolland Dale.
For like yon eagle, sweeping down
From off the lofty mountain crown
To seize some helpless songster, where
Its merry carol thrills the air,
So they await with faultless aim
To shoot thee down like antlered game.
And, oh! how sad my lot would be
To have thee lose thy life for me!"

Prophetic words, they scarce were said,
Instant the hunter turned his head

And raised his eye beyond the shore
To watch the sweeping eagle soar
High o'er the mountain's spurry comb,
To toil and effort both unknown.
But when the song-bird that strayed
Far from the underlying glade
Forsook the hill, a moment, there
The eagle's pinions sought the air,
Then downward shot, with screaming yell,
As if by accident it fell,
While fierce its talons sank to rest
Deep in the songster's fragile breast.
A moment's strife, a feeble cry,
Once more it poised its wings on high,
As if some favorite spot to find
Where to devour the feast unkind.
But quick the gun forsook the strand,
Within the hunter's ready hand
That held the errless weapon still
And motionless, as was the hill.
And when the flash of fire was past,
While shook the hillsides with the blast,
The soaring eagle seemed to sway
A moment from its pathless way;
Then closed its pinions with one cry,
And lifeless dropped from out the sky.

The echoing hills took up the roar
From cliff to mountain, wave to shore;

Each grottoed throat, each rocky glen,
Belched the wild answer back again,
And long denied the woodland peace,
As if the tumult ne'er would cease.
But when far up the sleepy tide,
The rumbling echo slowly died,
No other answer then she gave,
As sank the eagle to the wave.
Amazed, astonished, and enfi red,
The maid stood silent and admired.
Such wonderful marksmanship she knew
A guide more safe than her canoe,
And dread that long had filled her breast
By confidence was put to rest.

Long had the sun refused to shine
Upon the tallest mountain-pine.
And darker shadows calmly slept
Where still primeval forests swept
For night's broad mantle settling still
O'er mountain, valley, plain and hill,
Seemed now to cast a magic spell
Throughout each wooded vale and dell.
As if some water sprite arose
From out the lake in calm repose
'And waved its charm above the deep
That wooed each woodland bird to sleep.

“Fair maid,” at last the hunter said,
“’Neath where yon mountain lifts its head,
A slender trail of smoke ascends
From fires of either foes or friends.
Friends may they be; I hope for you
A shelter from the mountain dew.
For here so frail a form as thine,
Unpillowed, hastens to decline;
Mine be the rock, no cheerful hearth
Brings sweeter dreams than Mother Earth.
For there, when daylight sweeps the skies,
I wake with nature and arise;
And oft at night, as there I lay,
While sleep, a truant, stays away,
Up from my rocky pillow then
I count the stars and think of friends.
Give me the mountain air, that blows
To rout the brow of fevered woes,
And drive away each livid trace
Of sickening pallor from the face.
First tell me of from whence you came,
And bless my memory with thy name;
And if beneath yon smoky maze
No friend a welcoming hand displays,
Then may the joyous lot be mine
To grant each comfort that is thine.
My blade can trim the staunchest oak,
And mine the flint with fiery stroke,

My hands can gather from the tree
A heathery couch, enough for thee.
Rude though the hut, yet when 'tis done
A sleepless guard shall wait the sun;
And ere it downward sinks again
Beneath the mountain, lake and plain,
'Twill be my joy, when, safe from harm,
To trust thee to a parent's arm."

"My home," the blushing maiden sighed,
"Alas! is not the mountain-side.
Thy life has been one endless dream
Of sun-bathed cliffs and silvered stream.
Mine, the sad lot of one to dwell
Robbed of these scenes I love so well.
I dwell where o'er the marsh and brake
Ticonderoga guards the lake.
Strict is my guardian. Had he known
I ventured in my boat alone,
Not slumber had his eyelids bound
Until the wandering ward was found.
But since you know from whence I came,
And anxious seem to learn my name,
Bell Agnes happens to be mine,
Pray tell me, hunter, what is thine,
And where that land from whence thy heart
Sighs with deep sorrow to depart."

“My home: Lake Killoqua, afar:
Lies like a many spangled star,
Whose myriad arms, outstretching wide,
Welcome the wanderer to its tide,
While summer’s heaven seems to smile
Upon St. Hubert’s lonely isle.
There lies the Uttowanna blue,
Each drop as pure as heaven’s dew.
There sleeps Lake Eagle like a dream
And flows the Marion’s wild stream:
Nor purer current ere before
Was dashed upon a mountain shore.
Blest be the travelers who stray
Across Blue Mountain’s rugged way.
For when the wanderer’s watchful eye
Sweeps from that castle of the sky,
There lies beyond a scene unfurled,
Far from the mercenary world,
Fairer, methinks, a thousandfold
Than storied Canaan, when of old
From off Mt. Pisgah’s lofty crown
The weary wandering tribe looked down.
This is the land from whence I came,
And now, to answer for my name—
Call me but friend, for thus to thee
My dearest hope is but to be.
Within that appellate is shown
Most every noble precept known;

And he who justly bears that name
Deserves far more than deathless fame.
Those who can claim as justly due
Such great distinction are but few.
Oh, sinful, undeserving man!
Thy word a cheat, thy smile a sham,
A lustful nature stamps thy face
The deathless image of disgrace.
May he who dares that name aspire,
And drags it down in life's vile mire,
Living, be hated, robbed of ease,
Racked be his brain with slow disease,
His offsprings cursed with sore distress,
And want, and woe, and wretchedness.
Dead, may his bones of sinful lust
Commingle with the hopeless dust
Of the vile snake, that when 'tis done
The two may moulder into one.
And when on that eternal day,
The slumbering rise from out the clay,
Then may his name at heaven's throne
To mercy's record be unknown."

Dense grew the copse that lined the shore,
Where dark the fir trees towered o'er,
And banks of wildest mountain bloom
Spread to the air their sweet perfume.

The whortle bush of tangled green
Mantled the earth of each ravine,
Where oft the rattler gave alarm
To warn them of its deadly harm.
But, quick to heed, they shunned the foe,
As coiled the reptile for the blow,
And sought the paths that safer still
Lay higher on the stubborn hill.
And oft the hunter, when the way,
Was serpent barred, would dare to stay,
Then deal the blow with crushing stride,
And cast the writhing snake aside.
But soon the valley seemed to end
And far the climbless cliffs extend.
Nor might they trust the dangerous way
Without the guiding light of day,
Where, while the maiden eyed with care
The rock-bound paths that waited there,
The hunter's voice gave quick relief
To every woe, to every grief,
As from a neighboring hill he gazed
And pointed where a camp-fire blazed.
The cliff rose o'er the wave below,
As if no eye its height might know.
Deep at its base within the wood
Alone an Indian tepee stood.
The chief that claimed this rude abode
Of sun-dried skins, impatient strode

Before the fire, where, hissing, swung
A boiling pot on tripod hung,
And a cooked haunch of venison.
The chieftain cast a sullen eye
First on the mountain, then the sky,
Then to an oak that towered near,
Where hung the carcass of a deer,
As if once more his mind would trace
The deathless memory of the chase.
But turn at last toward the prize,
As thoughts of sumptuous feasts arise.
His dogs, a dozen, poor and lame,
Lounged 'neath the tree where hung the game.
Still dreaming yet the chase not done,
Though long the captured prize was won.
And oft their eyes with hunger gleamed
As their keen noses sniffed the steam.
But when, with an impatient mood
The chief's shrill whistle shook the wood,
His squaw from out the forest came
And added fuel to the flame.
And while the smouldering embers raise
From glowing coals to glaring blaze,
The startled dogs, in fear of harm,
Belched forth a chorus of alarm,
And long and loud they fiercely bayed
Where stood the hunter and the maid.

Some fierce, some eager to attack,
Added but fury to the pack.
Some stayed at distance safer bound,
And some the circle closed around
While the scared maiden from alarm,
Sank on the youth's protecting arm.
"Fear not, my maid, such foes as these
Might rout the game from beds of ease,
Or frighten off that venture near
Such as by nature cursed with fear;
But these are the divinest friends
Of all on earth that heaven lends.
The master's dog exhausts each limb,
And, fearless, braves to die for him;
And seeking only to command
The idle caress of his hand,
Gives in return a love alone
Truer than man has ever known.
Nor can the bludgeon's cruel sway
Drive the poor faithful wretch away;
For when chastisement's lash applies,
It cowers at his feet and cries.
Abused, each trembling limb delays,
And lingers where the master stays;
Nor hail, nor sleet, nor blinding snow,
Can bid its waiting patience go.
Refused affection; stoned to flight,
It waits till all is still at night,

Then steals upon the master's sword
And while he sleeps, stands faithful guard.
These are my friends. Ah! well may fear
He who would strike when I am near.
These are my friends;" and while he spoke,
The extended hand laid smooth the stroke,
And those that fiercest howled in rage,
Sought the caress to first engage;
The chief's stern whistle called the pack,
That, cowed with fear, came trembling back;
And to his feet each quivering hound
Crawled on its belly and laid down;
Save one that sped along the shore,
Then paused to guard the tepee door.

"Chief," said the youth, "thy friendly fire,
A welcome here did hope inspire.
For when, past yonder cliff so tall
We watched the smoke rise over all,
I thought some settler might extend,
The welcome shelter of a friend.
This is primeval nature here,
The home of catamount and deer.
Strange are these hills o'er which we go.
I crave but shelter; well you know
My frail companion might not dare
To slumber in the mountain air,

For women were by nature made
To grace a more protecting shade
Than that afforded by the oak
Or offered by the rifted rock.
Mine be the joy, may she retire,
To guard thy tent and keep the fire.
I only seek for slumber sound,
A couchless bed upon the ground.
For like thyself, the mountain free
Brings naught but peaceful dreams to me,
So if thy squaw will honor her
With heather bed or couch of fir,
Then may thy woes in life be mine,
And all my joyous hours, thine."

Fierce gleamed the chieftain, his reply
Already glistened in his eye.
"Stranger! no welcome here I give,
Thine be a cherished hope to live.
This very night I placed a vow,
Upon yon mountain's lofty brow,
That, lest my aged arm belie,
He who might trespass here should die.
Long has my fortune been to dwell,
Here in this quiet slumbering dell,
And oft when winter's bitter hand,
Spread famine o'er the icebound land,

I've killed the game, and, quick to heed,
Shared with the soldiers sore in need.
Ne'er have I sought to be repaid,
Forgetting I had been of aid.
For God has blest the land with game,
And touched my eye with faultless aim,
And till to-day, I ne'er before,
Denied a welcome to this shore,
But gave each friendly trifle asked,
And now the often weary task,
In kind return was here supplied,
By murder on yon mountain-side.
Yon peak, where lately sank the sun,
Rebukes each worthy action done,
And, like yon dog within the dell
O'er tepee there, stands sentinel.
Or like the eagle from its height,
Keeps guard beneath a dizzy flight,
So here, a watchful eye shall know,
And guard this dell from wandering foe."

The savage face showed instant rage,
Like scowls the lion in its cage.
And long his hand besought the strife,
Where gleamed the cruel hunting knife.
In rage he paced before the fire.
And ground his very teeth with ire.

Then straightening his stalwart form,
Like gathering clouds precede the storm,
Upon his brow deep frowns appeared,
That well the trembling maiden feared.
But, quick the challenge to defy,
Defiance lit the hunter's eye,
And swift his hand rose to resent
The insult ere it scarce was sent,
His sinewy arm, by reason stayed,
Stood ready with the flashing blade,
While anger sought to gain relief,
As fearless he addressed the chief.

"I am a friend to every one.
If anywhere beneath the sun,
As through this weary world we wend,
It be a crime to be a friend,
Then may the lot be ours to dwell
Unsheltered in this mountain dell.
Or may some wandering hunter know,
Whose mightier arm first dealt the blow,
I fear no anger that is thine,
Nor truer steel thy blade, than mine,
Though fifty times as quick thy ire,
My flint is just as quick to fire,
'And just as sure to find its prize,
'As is the sun again to rise.

To me the strife is pleasant, when
My blade arises to defend.
Such was my promise to this maid,
Found helpless in yon mountain glade,
This sunken boat within the tide,
That I will be her guard and guide
Though every savage of thy race
Arise in wrath to guard the place.
Nor court, nor counsel not my foes
Through countless multitudes arose;
And think each hardship overpaid,
By one sweet blessing from this maid.
Nor think, bold chief, I have a fear,
Of thy light boastful challenge here.
Scarce was yon mountain touched with dew,
Than fierce I struggled there with two,
That almost at the close of day,
Engaged me in the bloody fray.
But tell me, chief, why show the blade,
In anger to this helpless maid?
First tell me why thy vow should be,
'And if the curse falls just to me,
Then by the God above, I throw
The welcome gauntlet of a foe.
I dread to wage the strife alone,
While still the cause remains unknown.
Or if thy lips refuse that cause,
Then by good heaven's sacred laws,

Guide me where friendship's holy name,
The welfare of the maid may claim,
And backward in this very glen
We prove the contest, man to man."

No sooner had the hunter told,
Of conflict on the mountain bold,
Than o'er the chieftain's face there came
A look of mingled love and shame.
While to his otter-belt beneath,
The bloodless blade sank in its sheath.
Now calm he gazed upon the hill,
Then halting by the fire stood still;
Nor aught of language could enhance
Simplicity's soft elegance,
As from his lips the hunter heard
The accents of forgiving word.
"Hunter, I gladly tell thee why
The anger flashed within my eye.
The little comfort here in store
Glad had I offered thee and more,
But that my bosom's only pride,
While hunting on the mountain-side,
Was shot, for cause to me unknown,
And wounded, left to die alone,
By soldiers who with cruel hand
Spread woe and murder o'er the land.

When from the weary chase I came,
As o'er my shoulder hung the game,
I heard, far in a distant dell,
A voice, alas! I knew too well.
And when I gave the wild hallo
The winds brought back one wail of woe.

“The blood had stained the feeble tide,
That trickled from the mountain-side,
And as I followed up the rill,
I knew there waited naught but ill.
The tainted stream, a crimson trail,
With anxious steps, soon told the tale
He could not speak; the longing eye
Sought the faint brook that wandered by,
But when I stooped beside the brink,
And blessed his burning lips with drink,
With strength renewed, his voice arose;
He told me of the cruel foes,
And spoke of one who joined the strife,
Shorn of all weapons save the knife,
That 'mid the conflict's bloody din,
Dealt them that fate they meant for him.
I bore him home within my arms,
And blessed his wounds with sacred charms;
My squaw, with lamentations drear,
Dropped on his pallid brow the tear;

But when he closed his feeble eye,
And pressed my hand a last good bye,
With hopeless wail his mother cried,
And as the sun went down, he died.
Stranger, from what his whispers said,
Though now those speechless lips are dead,
That here a blessing might reveal,
Crossed by eternity's great seal,
Thine was the eye that gleamed to save
My boy from sleeping 'neath yon wave;
If heaven designed thy blade to spare
The vengeance that my vows forswear,
Then here I welcome unto thee
The choicest place in my tepee."

O'ercome with grief, the chief broke down,
And turned toward the mountain crown,
As if alone his eye might know,
The tear that eased his bitter woe,
Or let that weakness but impart
Its soothing balm upon his heart;
At last the hunter said, "Oh, chief,
Accept our sympathy in grief.
I did not see thy boy, and when
The cruel strife came to an end,—
An end, where fate alone prevailed,
Though fierce the bitter foe assailed,

I cast an anxious glance at will
O'er the lone lake and silent hill;
I little dreamed the wretches dire,
Had dared upon a child to fire,
That had I seen, or had I known,
My arm, not thine, had bourne him home."

The chieftain's hand rebuked his ire,
By waving welcome to the fire.
Where soon was spread beside the wave,
A feast the gormand's eye might crave.
Where from the rustic tripod hung
The smoking haunch of venison;
With jack snipe from the deep morass,
And teas of spice and sassafras,
Sweet honey from the mountain bees
And sugar from the maple trees,
All these, and many more were laid
Before the hunter and the maid,
Who, seated on an otter skin,
Welcomed the summons to begin.
And when the feast was cleared away,
The chieftain's friendly pipe of clay
Was lighted by the squaw, who came,
Dipping its bowl beneath the flame,
Then passed it round. The chieftain drew
One puff, and said, "I welcome you,

My friends, and may I prove to be
As true a friend some day to thee,
As is this pipe, from which, I know,
The smoke ne'er answered to a foe."

The proffered pipe had caused a trace
Of joy to flood the savage face,
And long contentment seemed to stay,
As the young hunter puffed away,
As if his smoking proved the test
To him of friendship far the best;
But when his cunning eye espied
That the old chief was satisfied,
He nimbly pressed the burning weed,
And handed back the smoking reed
To the old squaw, who smiled to see
The smoke pour forth so lavishly.
And as from out the stem she drew
A heavy cloud of smoke, that blew
Over the maid with endless curl,
She pressed the pipe upon the girl.
The cherry lips had ne'er been asked
Before to do so strange a task;
The squaw with honest purpose gazed,
Where stood the blushing maid amazed.
Nor dared she now refuse the squaw.
She grasped the pipe and took one draw,

Then gave a puff; the smoke arose
In strangling streams from mouth and nose,
And ere the maid could lay it down,
The pipe fell broken to the ground.

No redder had the embers grown
Upon the fiery hearth of stone,
Than were her cheeks, when first her eyes
Beheld the chieftain's shattered prize;
Trembling, she wondered what to do,
But shunned the old squaw's savage view,
Whose well contorted face, from age,
Looked more than hideous in rage;
Her eye flashed fire, and wrath o'ercame
Each reasoning recess in her brain.
Then long-taught superstitions came,
Adding but fuel to the flame,
As from the earth, with grappling hand,
She tossed aloft the shore-strewn sand,
And while her wailings shook the air,
Rubbed the fine granite in her hair.
Then downward sought her trembling knees,
And chanted weirdsome melodies,
Cantations wild, as if to stay
The evil spirits from her way,
Hoping the chant would break the spell,
That started when the peace-pipe fell;

But when the maid at last o'ercame
The stifling smoke that swooned her brain,
The hunter from his pocket drew
A polished pipe of eboned hue;
And as he placed it in her hand,
The squaw's well vented ire grew calm.

"Squaw," said the youth, "despite thy fear,
This maid no evil brings thee here;
If aught save joy shall come to thee
Then may my life the forfeit be;
I am her friend; if thou art mine,
That same sweet sacred claim be thine;
The unaccustomed pipe of clay,
Took senses, strength and breath away.
And while within that thoughtless spell,
Unknown to her the peace-pipe fell.
But since the luckless deed is done,
Then may this prove a better one,
To me the trophy of a strife
That came near costing me my life.
The wounding blade had sunk to rest
Half to the hilt within my breast.
But though the dagger dimmed my sight,
My arm shot forth with fearful might,
And with a sweeping vengeful blow,
The mighty stroke brought down the foe.

A savage hand would cleave the hair,
And dance around it in the air,
Then dye each feature with a flood
Of warpaint made from human blood;
But as the heavy foe came down,
With leaden force upon the ground,
I saw this pipe unbroken roll,
And quick I seized the polished bowl.
Let all thy anger now be stayed,
In restitution for the maid.
To thee I gladly give away
This treasured trophy of the fray."

A savage smile came o'er the face,
Where age had left its deathless trace,
Nor dared accept it, till the chief,
Lessened by words her disbelief;
And long she eyed the pipe with care
As if some evil lingered there.
But when her fears were at an end,
With blowing breath she tried the stem.
Then filled the bowl, with smiling joy;
Like infant o'er a new found toy,
And 'mid the waning twilight gray,
Sank by the fire and smoked away.

* * * * *

'Twas night at last on lake and plain,
And the new moon began its train

Across the endless depth of sky,
Where the tall mountains frowned on high,
O'er which it slowly rose to view,
With myriad stars in retinue;
From off the lake there came no sound,
Save from the splash of finny bound,
That now and then an echo gave,
Where leaped the pickerel in the wave.
But on the hill and o'er the tide,
The very air seemed to have died,
And not a ripple strove to wake
The water lilies on the lake.
As if they long their prayers had said,
Like children at the trundle-bed,
And folding in each petal deep,
Sank on their slender stems to sleep.

The fire, that when the feast was o'er,
Shot floods of light along the shore,
And cast their broken shadows wide
Like giants on the mountain-side,
Long had refused the glaring blaze,
And settled to a smouldering maze,
Where sat the hunter, while the chief,
Free from all earthly care and grief,
Lay stretched in slumber on the ground,
Encircled by his faithful hounds,

That nestled close, as if a pride,
To linger at the master's side.
Each feature showed that weary care
Long as a guest had settled there,
And conflict that had left its trace
Deep chiseled on his aged face,
In scars, bespoke the bitter strife
Of battle-ax and hunting knife;
But o'er it all was plainly shown,
That agile strength was yet his own;
And time, and want, and care, and woe,
Had striven in vain to overthrow
A giant strength that nature gave,
From her who slumbered in the grave.
Thus while kind nature sleep supplied,
Life ebbed and flowed its gentle tide,
That, with each peaceful breath he drew,
Strengthened his weary limbs anew;
Not like the mad, impulsive stream,
That lights the eye with frolic's gleam,
When youth, 'neath wild misguiding sway,
Turns day to night and night to day;
But every sinew, like the reed
Tried by the flood, drank nature's need.
Though Time's defacing fingers bold
Each feature of his face foretold,
Not Time alone had dared to plough
The deeper furrows o'er his brow;

Though sorrow oft had been his guest,
Though care its signet claim had pressed,
More oft ingratitude had known
The kindness that his heart had shown,
And this had deeper scars inlaid,
Than sorrow, care, or blasting age.
But as his bosom rose and fell,
Sonorous slumber shook the dell;
Nor evil dared that sleep annoy,
To break one endless dream of joy,
That e'en the strife had not defiled,
For while he dreaming slept, he smiled.
He dreamed; the stag was brought to bay,
Upon a narrow, rocky way,
Nor loitering, had it paused to lave
Its tired limbs within the wave.
His dogs! well weary from the chase,
Sank in exhaustion from the race,
And one by one, forsook the game,
And sought the tepee sore and lame.
For long had mountain, cliff, and vale,
Answered an echo to their wail,
And oft, where swollen streams were wide,
Their limbs had pressed the stubborn tide,
And borne them on o'er rock and glen,
Only to bring them back again,
For well the antler seemed to know,
O'er tiring paths to lead the foe,

Where with strained eyes and breathless speed,
Each weary hound had striven to lead.
But now, from off the scented track,
The hills no echo answered back,
Save from the cry that shook the dell
When the tired antler leaped and fell,
Where in his dream, the chief alone,
Climbed struggling up the hills of stone.

Great was his joy when first his eyes,
In dreams beheld the fallen prize,
That on the rugged mountain lay,
'Neath where a cliff had barred its way.
Far in below, the mountain stream
Fought with the hills, then rolled between,
That, angry, toward the broad lake's shore,
Rumbled with clashing, constant roar;
But when the eager chief drew near,
With ready blade, the wounded deer
Half rose, and, as it shook with wrath,
Stood ready to dispute the path,
And swayed its spreading antlers wide,
From precipice to mountain-side.
The chief, ere first he dared assail
The wounded antler, sought the vale,
As if to measure well with care,
The danger that seemed waiting there.

But when he saw each breath that came,
Brought vigor to the wounded game,
He firmly grasped the ready blade,
Then spurned the mountain, where he stayed
Nor slack'd his pace until the foe
Stood panting 'neath the waiting blow,
A second; as he paused for strength,
He raised his tomahawk; at length,
Forward it shot with faultless aim,
Straight to the forehead of the game,
Where, when the glancing hatchet fell,
A stifled wail rang through the dell
And echoed back upon the breeze,
As the stunned monarch sought its knees;
With agile leap he cleared each horn,
And lighted on the trembling form,
And the quick dagger sank to rest,
Deep to the hilt within its breast;
But though the hatchet fell with skill,
And deep the dagger stained the hill,
The wounded antler's strength defied
The stunning blow, the crimson tide.
It rose in rage with bellowing moan,
It staggered o'er the rugged stone,
And as the blade sank deep again,
And freer flowed the crimson stain
From fatal wounds, one feeble wail
Was echoed o'er the rocky trail,

And with one last but mighty leap,
Headlong it plunged far o'er the steep.

The wounded stag had leaped: in vain
The chief's cry chided far amain,
The rugged hills; to clear his form,
Free from the antler's tangling horns,
Was vain; too late; upon the shore,
For both the fatal chase was o'er,
But when from off the mountain tall,
In dreams he felt his body fall,
Where far below the rugged heath,
Like a great wound that lay beneath,
Offered them both within the dell,
Alone an unseen burial,
One throb of bitter anguish came,
Racking his swooning, senseless brain;
But ere that fate reaped its desire,
One glorious, gorgeous flood of fire
Swept down the mountain, where the sun
Its royal course had just begun,
And, striking full upon his eyes,
Woke his dulled senses to surprise,
That, blinded by the sudden ray,
Turned to behold the new-born day.

The chief leaped to his feet, a trace
Of joy ran o'er his pallid face,

And long he eyed each cliff in view,
As if the dream might yet be true,
And he by fate, had there been hurled
And wakened in another world.
Each cliff at first seemed doubly strange,
And long his searching vision claimed,
But when at last the true surprise,
Rose with his tepee to his eyes,
His wild companions of the chase
Leaped to his breast and kissed his face,
And as he shunned their affection wild,
The watchful hunter rose and smiled.

“Chief,” said the hunter, “well I know,
In dreams you struggled with the foe;
Oft through the night your heaving breast,
With deep groans told of broken rest;
And oft a transient smile would play,
That bore the touch of victory,
But fly as if in timid fear,
Of the fierce frowns that followed near,
Like when the songster from the brake,
Spreads its weak wings to cross the lake
But seeing high o’er rocky ledge,
The hawk, it turning seeks the hedge.
So the faint smiles would rise, then swoon,
Like butterflies from off the bloom,

That but a second dare remain,
And vanish quicker than they came.”
The chieftain told with ready will,
Of weary chase, of rugged hill;
And tomahawk that ne’er before,
Had failed to drink the fatal gore.
Then of the strife, and last of all,
He told him of the frightful fall;
And as with gestures wild he told,
Of tiring chase o’er mountain bold,
The unseen maiden all the while
Graced the long story with a smile;
And said, as leaving the tepee,
“My blessing be alike to thee;”
But when toward the shore she came
Where stood the youth, a blushing flame,
The equal blessing well denied,
For countless times ’twas multiplied
For the young hunter who had kept
A sleepless vigil while she slept.
“Sweet was my sleep, on skins of fawn,
With pillow from the downy swan;
And while thou stoodst watch o’er me,
I prayed a heavenly guard for thee.”

The morning sun had kissed with care,
Each sumptuous tress, each lock of hair,

And every curl seemed to aspire
To touch her brow and then take fire,
In unconsuming flames of gold,
That hovered in its flaxen fold;
And the red sun, high on the hill,
Seemed in her honor lingering still,
Striving to change with fiery flood,
The woodland to a field of blood,
While to the lake its rays were given,
In colors like the clouds in heaven;
As if so fair a one as she
Had wandered from eternity,
Where faultless beauty dwells alone,
To Gods but not to mortals known,
While He had paused to light with flame,
The land like that from whence she came.
"Fair maid, a blessing given by thee,
Is far more sacred unto me,
Than is the fragrant incense where
The gowned priest waves a blessing prayer;
The sleepless night to me was joy,
To guard thy rest lest fears annoy,
And 'mid thy slumber, for thy sake,
Gladly my hands kept me awake.
While the good chief, with mighty stride,
In dreamland climbed the mountain-side,
Awake I sought yon distant glen,
To kill the panther in its den.

And robbed within that woodland dark,
The stalwart birch-tree of its bark;
I bore them both back here at last,
And with my dagger drove the task.
The slender bark before the flame,
Bent till it gave the swan-like frame
Firm as the rock on which you stand.
Where, when I spread with careful hand
The birch-bark, then I started in,
To split the panther's sinewy skin.
I bound the bark around the frame,
And oft the raw-hide went and came,
Until care bound, with strong sinew,
As well remodeled a canoe,
As ere a month of labor gave,
Stood ready waiting for the wave;
Gaze where yon hawthorn's branches spread
Above the water lilies' head,
Nor let the journey's cares annoy,
Mark, for the effort was but joy."

No greater joy was ever given
To the tired monk, whose hope of heaven
Is realized through constant prayer,
As in a dream he enters there,
Than now was hers; surprise was more,
When first her glances met the shore;

For there, beneath a shady bower,
Deep perfumed by the mountain flower,
Where myriad slender stems uphold
The lily-bloom of snow and gold,
Her dear canoe lay resting still,
As motionless as was the hill;
That, as if with each strong sinew,
A consciousness were given too;
It seemed to dread the agile blade,
That soon must drive it from the shade,
And nestled deep within the wave,
Where countless flowers a welcome gave.

“Ah, maid!” the stalwart hunter said,
“Well was my lot a sleepless bed;
Each rugged hill, each deep ravine,
With many a weary mile between,
Are fraught with effort sore to me,
Much less to one so frail as thee;
Long will this shell, ere sinks the sun,
Leave many a weary step undone,
And ere the whippoorwill again
Calls to its mate from out the glen,
The canon’s mouth, that gleams o’er all,
Like cancerous wounds upon the wall,
Will rise to view, while sweeps along
The wild St. Sacrament its song.

And when at last we reach the shore,
And well my promise kept, is o'er,
Then must I leave, the lot be mine,
To seek again the mountain pine,
And oft in after years, I pray,
This shell shall bear thee on thy way,
Where joy and merriment o'erflow,
To drown the bitter dregs of woe.
Pressed by the paddle, may it heed,
And trembling answer quick with speed,
And safely through the waters glide,
To where both peace and love abide;
And when upon the mountain crest,
I chase the game, or pause to rest,
My tenderest thoughts will turn to you,
While drifting in this birch canoe,
Perhaps with one whom fate has blessed,
By fortune far o'er all the rest,
A youth of honor brave and fair
Who well deserves thy loving care;
Then, as you press this quivering shell,
And sweetly breathe love's rapturous spell,
As stolen glances of the eye
Arouse, awake, affection's sigh,
Then may remembrance more than kind,
Bring other scenes and friends to mind,
'And while you think of those most dear,
Who chance by fortune to be near,

O may your mind a moment stray,
Far o'er the mountain's rugged way,
And ere the pictured memories flee,
Waste but one tender thought on me."

Voiceless the maiden turned away,
And sought the fiery orb of day,
Where as she searched the crimson skies,
Her cheeks partook their kindred dies,
While strange emotions of unrest
Swept with a sigh throughout her breast;
Though she had waited long before
She bade him welcome to the shore,
With trembling lip and aching heart,
Longer she dreaded now to part;
And though the princely court of pride,
Full many a suiter had supplied,
Her heart had ne'er confessed a truth,
As here it had toward mountain youth;
His eye was faultless, true and strong,
To her his voice was like a song,
That softly o'er her ear was hurled,
And wooed her to another world.
So long she stood and with a sigh,
Searched the broad heavens with her eye,
And while she gazed o'er mountains tall,
Knew that she loved, and that was all.

Not long to hold the bashful spell,
Lay still the echoes of the dell.
A thousand warblers of the lake,
Made havoc in the distant brake,
Of all the notes that e'er were heard
From trembling lute or pipe or bird.
The chief with arrow soon supplied,
From out the broad lake's waveless tide,
To all a welcome morning meal
Of striped bass and pickerel;
And when at last the feast was o'er
Proudly he led them to the shore;
But ere toward the brink he drew
From 'mid the flowers, the canoe;
He read upon the sunlit strand
The slender lines within her hand.
Long was the life the chief portrayed
With joy and comfort for the maid,
With now and then a brooding ill,
That made each joy more joyful still.
And as he traced the finished line,
The hunter smiling said, "Read mine."

The chieftain took the hunter's hand,
And the strong tracings closely scanned,
But ere he started in anew,
He sought the vale with thoughtful view,

As if imploring from the glade,
The future secrets of its shade;
Then turned his face toward the skies,
Took a long breath and closed his eyes;
“Hunter, the fate that most I see,
Are fields, with conflict rife, for thee,
And quick thy country’s call to heed,
Born not to follow but to lead,
Will wield the broadsword o’er the plain,
In answer to the bugle’s strain.”
Once more the hand he gazed upon,
Then in a lofty tone went on,
While slowly he reclosed each eye,
Shook his gray head and breathed a sigh:
“Here lies thy fate; though fierce and brave,
You rout the foe from cliff to wave,
A deadlier hand than braves the strife,
Lurks at thy heels to take thy life;
Nor are a monarch’s unjust laws
For such a heartless deed, the cause;
The path is dark; amid the roar,
I see thee wandering on the shore.
The fiery peals that rend the sky
Wage a fierce battle up on high;
With echoing roll, the thunderous groans
Shake the dark mountains to their domes,
And the fierce lightning’s vivid flame,
Adds vision to the demon’s aim;”

Here paused the chief; close by the wave,
The maiden strict attention gave,
The blush, while listening to the tale,
From crimson turned to ashen pale;
And glancing at the hunter's eye,
Thoughtless her breast escaped a sigh;
Now louder in emphatic strain,
The aged chief went on again:
"Hunter, I warn thee, when you hear,
The song birds of another year,
*When first the daisy lifts its head
In snowy bloom, from mountain bed,
Though fierce the storm, though dark the night,
Let not those evils stay thy flight;
But when the storm with fearful wail,
Strikes down a monarch of the vale,
If 'mid the crash, thy step be stayed,
Then seek the friendship of thy blade.
For near Ticonderoga's wall
There waits the murderous rifle ball.*
The storm is o'er, the future now,
With fairer vision sweeps my brow."
And with a look of calm surprise,
The hunter sought the maiden's eyes.
The chieftain took her slender hand,
And drew her closer on the strand,
Then with a smile upon his face,
Placed the two hands in closed embrace,

And raised his own, where when 'twas done,
Lay strength and beauty, clasped in one:
He bowed his head, he breathed a prayer,
That lingered like a blessing there,
While from each bosom seemed to roll,
One trembling wave from soul to soul.
"Last is the vision that my eyes
Can read within the future skies.
Those skies, where sorrow, care and pain,
Each for an interval must reign,
Alike with many shadowing cloud,
O'er prince and pauper, poor and proud,
That fate, which errless judgment heeds
And blindly follows where it leads,
Here now, assigns the joy to me,
To give this trembling maid to thee;
Men call this spot enchanted land;
And this Black Mountain where you stand,
Henceforth, thou art, so fortune tells,
The foster children of these dells;
Nor doubt the forecast well defined,
That tells me, hunter, she is thine."
He waved his hand with magic curl,
Around, above, the blushing girl;
And bending o'er her graceful form,
Blessed each fair feature with a charm,
In a strange, savage, unknown tongue,
That o'er her ear like music hung,

And when the finished blessing came,
Sweetly she asked the chief his name.

By custom the old chief replied,
"As old as is yon mountain-side,
The name I humbly bear is one
A grateful mother gave her son;
When the young infant sinks to rest,
For the first time upon her breast,
The mother's eye exhausts its flame,
In searching for her boy a name,
Be it a wolf within its den,
Or some fair songster from the glen,
A sturdy hill, a restless wave,
Or savage panther in its cave;
No matter what may chance to roll,
Through the raised windows of her soul
She hails the vision there with joy,
And casts that name upon her boy.
The stalwart chief who gave me life,
By counsel wise avoiding strife,
For years held undisputed sway
Along this battle trodden way.
When first life's feeble stream begun
To feed my infant limbs, the sun
Over yon mountain shot the flame,
That since has blessed me with a name.

When purple daylight breathed the spell,
Of rapturous joy through yonder dell,
High in the distant heavens arose,
One pillared cloud in calm repose,
One floating, misty bank of dew,
That drank from out the sky each hue,
And as one look of joy she sent,
Where gleamed that snowy battlement,
The sun arose with fiery flood,
And burnt it to a cloud of blood,
And while affection's lips were pressed,
And I with countless charms was blest,
She raised me from her bosom proud,
And named her first-born boy, Red Cloud."

"Red Cloud, as many years be thine,
As fate has given yon mountain pine,
Whose ragged arms, and rugged form,
Still fling defiance to the storm.
May heaven its choicest blessings send,
To thee for sheltering a friend.
As on life's weary way you go,
May heaven divide each bitter woe,
And while a portion falls to thee
Cast the remaining part on me;
When the tired chase your strength has tried,
May not the effort be denied,

But when the captured prize is won,
Thine be the joy to bear it home.
And when the stars bedeck the skies,
Then may each tender thought arise,
To Him who marks the sparrow's fall,
And guides a providence o'er all.
And when at last life's race is o'er,
And horn and hounds entice no more,
As gently sinks the sun below,
In winter time, these peaks of snow,
From whose reflecting crowns, its rays
Strive to relight these mountain ways.
So may your towering deeds arise,
Ere life's last sunset leaves the skies,
And may each noble action done,
Backward reflect life's sinking sun,
And cast it at your latest breath,
O'er the dark, dismal vales of death."

The ready boat received the maid.
The youthful hunter pressed the blade.
And as they bade a last farewell,
The trembling boat forsook the dell;
Nor swiftly paddle ere before
Sent back a ripple to the shore;
Where chief and squaw stood side by side,
And watched the fading canoe glide,

Over the water where with song,
Pressed by the blade it shot along,
Till rocky rampart hid from view,
The waving maid, the birch canoe:
Then one by one the mountains cast
Their scenes, each lovelier than the last,
And islets rose along the way,
Where underneath the waters lay
So clear, each scene seemed just as fair,
Within the water as air.
And oft the blade hung idly by
And waited for the wandering eye,
But, though a thousand times, the steep,
With rapturous vision charmed the deep,
The hunter's heart no scene could stir,
Like could one tender smile from her;
Each mountain, dressed in wild attire
Seemed from the sun to borrow fire,
Each foaming rill that drank the flame
And roaring down the mountain came,
Fell like the sounds upon her ear,
Of music far too sweet to hear;
While ceaselessly the blade supplied
The stroke that swept them o'er the tide.
Past many a wooded alcove deep,
Where but the songster dared to peep,
And where the drowsy owl serene,
Sought shelter for its mid-day dream;

And now and then, where up the wave,
The antlered monarch stopped to lave
Its sinewy limbs, with muffled oar
They noiselessly crept along the shore.
Though swift the boat skimmed o'er the tide,
The stroke no murmuring noise supplied,
But swept as silent and as still
As steals the twilight o'er the hill.
But when the freshly scented breeze
Wafted their presence through the trees
To where the antler's graceful form
Lifted its haughty head in scorn,
Then, with his nostrils spreading wide
He sniffed the air, he spurned the tide,
And long his hoofs rang through the dell,
That echoed back a loud farewell,
And woke an answer where on high,
The eagle swept the pathless sky,
That freely back a war cry gave,
In endless screams o'er hill and wave.

Dim rolled the distant sun-bathed hills,
Decked with a thousand lace-like rills,
Where many a cataract of foam
Forsook the mountain's lofty dome,
And now and then the bittern's boom
Ceased, as it left the dark lagoon,

And spread its feathering pinions low
With scarce apparent skill to go,
While sluggish strength the effort gave
That left a track along the wave,
Stretched its long neck and sailed away
To some dark recess of a bay,
Where like a blotch of blood on high,
The red bird caroled forth its cry,
And where throughout the evening long,
The hoarse frog sang its tuneful song.

Ye skies of arching endless blue,
Ye hills of waving deathless green,
What God-like artist forced each hue,
'And painted on the earth this dream?
No wonder that o'er mountains high,
Tireless the eagle sweeps the sky,
And circling round each lofty dome,
Hails with delight its rock-bound home;
No wonder when the spring enflames,
That long the lingering snow remains,
Till forced at last, it forms a rill
And, loud complaining, leaves the hill.
Dear to each wanderer are these charms,
Where the tall fir, with outstretched arms,
Spreads to the cliff its shadows there,
Like a gowned priest engaged in prayer.

Oh who could not forever stroll,
Where scenes like these enfire the soul,
Pleased but to be kind nature's child,
As free as are the mountains wild,
And die in peace, when life is done
To know that memory might live on.
Welcoming bid the earth enslave
A sleepless tenant of the grave;
Not to arise when heaven's decree
Bids it unchain its captives free,
Pleased but to sleep, enrapt with joy;
Nor future hopes, nor fears annoy,
While recollection there supplies
An endless heaven to his eyes.

When far the wanderer's steps have trod,
Past each oasis on life's road,
Oh memory! What joys in store
Be thine to lead us back once more
To see, though dimmed with care and tears,
Behind the wrinkled mask of years;
'Tis thee and only thee supplies
To age its comfort ere it dies;
Thee, only thee, that brings relief
To soothe the widow's sorrowing grief,
And thou alone dispels the gloom,
When mourn the loved ones o'er the tomb.

Though countless joys be ever stayed
To give their memories to the maid,
Life's dearest moments will recall
The tepee and the water-fall,
And recollection oft reclaim,
That glorious morning ride again.
But when Defiance Mount looked down
Upon them with a sullen frown,
Where soon they reached the pebbly shore,
Her brimming cup of joy ran o'er.
Though fearful that her guardian sire
Might meet her with but angered ire,
She hoped to drink one draught of heaven,
And meet a mother's smiles, forgiven.
Too soon the contemplation past,
Too soon reflection came at last,
For well her bosom woke the sigh,
That told far sadder thoughts were nigh,
And long the throbbings rose and fell,
And long reflection cast its spell,
Until with strong but gentle hand
He raised and placed her on the strand.

" 'Tis done, fair maid; the solemn vow
And pleasing task is finished now.
Well made, well kept, thy parents yearn
To greet with joy thy safe return.

The shelter of thy home be thine;
Yon rock-ribbed mountain-chasm mine.
Fain would I whisper ere we part,
Light goes the hunter, but his heart,
Ere that he seeks the mountain way,
Tears from his breast and pleads to stay."

"Stay, hunter! stay; the day is gone;
The way is rough; the night is long.
Glad will I welcome thee to share,
As honored guest, our evening fare.
And let thy weary limbs be blest
With wholesome food and dreamless rest.
Nor could I part with one so kind
And leave an error on thy mind.
For while in yonder far-off land,
You sought my name upon the strand,
Bell Agnes then I told to you;
And while I said but what is true,
I feared the fate my name might bring,
For we are loyal to the King.
Stern is the captain of the guard,
And, hunter! I'm that captain's ward,
Since but an infant to his home
A sole dependency I own.
A sister's child, though not the name,
The valor of his race I claim.

My father, born the sword to wield,
Fell fighting on the battle-field;
Nor since have known that sacred bliss,
Denied by death, a mother's kiss.
Refused in life a father's due,
One stroke in battle killed the two.
Hope lingered like a feeble flame,
But when the fatal message came,
Each fear was driven to belief,
When she, heartbroken, died of grief;
Yet love no greater could she give
Might heaven bid that mother live;
Nor strengthen the affection wild
They lavish on an orphan child.
Thus, in the distant, far-off dell,
I faltered of my name to tell,
For well you know I shook in fear
Of Rolland Dale, Ye Mountaineer;
And lest some dreadful fate befall,
I just reversed it,—that was all,—
And gladly now the truth I tell,
My rightful name is Agnes Bell.”

“Ah, sweet deception, love alone
Can for such falsity atone;
Blest be the day, though dear the cost,
That I my mountain pathway lost;

And on the rocky shore I came
To one,—no matter what the name,—
Whose sweet companionship is more
Than all in life I've known before.
When far amid yon mountain scene
My eyes forsook the grandest dream,
But softly sought thy features coy
And mutely drank in endless joy.
When time and fortune both unroll
Their future fates upon my soul,
Then may some noble action done
Mark my poor life a worthy one.
Oh, Agnes! Then may Heaven's decree
Lead my unworthy steps to thee;
Unworthy now, my precious prize,
I stand convicted in thine eyes;
I little thought that one so young
Might heed the lying, slanderous tongue,
But since the truth aspires to rise,
And gives my mind this fresh surprise,
Then may foregoing love prevail,
For, Agnes, I am Rolland Dale!"

As thunderbolt with fiery blast
Strikes down the vessel's stalwart mast,
And frees the halyards of each sail,
That shattered, trembles to the gale,

So struck his words; her trembling form
Shook like a leaf before the storm;
And long she cast to heaven her view,
And prayed it yet might not be true;
But reason plead its cause in vain,
And warred with love within her brain
As if with bitter hope to end
This more than friendship of a friend,
Who, for her sake, had dared the strife
And for her safety risked his life.
Then duty rose o'er all the rest
To chide the love within her breast;
And honor to her fallen sire
Strove to emblaze her cheek with ire,
Where oft 'mid broken sighs of woe
Came the demand to bid him go.
But ere determination stirred,
Her trembling lips refused the word.
Each cruel thought, each heartless tale,
That she had heard of Rolland Dale,
Reason to memory did recall,
Where faithful love denied them all,
Forcing admission to her mind
That he had been far more than kind.
But, when she saw the hunter stand
With downcast eyes, with outstretched hand,
That back no verbal answer gave,
But mutely pleading by the wave,

Then love began to task her mind,
And ask if freedom was a crime,
While through thought's garnished chambers flow,
A thousand echoes, answering: "No!"
A breeze aroused the quiet dell,
And softly rose the waving swell,
Rocking the canoe with a sigh
That plead alike to ear and eye.
Each mountain, valley, dale, and hill
Seemed to rebuke her stubborn will,
That strove to stir to disbelief
The future forecasts of the chief.
But when the sun sank slowly down,
Bathing with fire the mountain-crown,
Where, far beneath the rocky way,
The darker shades of twilight lay,
Ah! thought she then of him whose hand
Offered protection on the strand;
And reason tottered on its throne,
Where all but memory had flown.
Nor longer could it worthy prove,
But, vanquished, yielded unto love;
And, though she battled hard to stay
The tide of love's resistless way,
She felt it o'er her senses steal
As turned each bitter woe to weal,
Aflood, with fiery impulse grand,
With outstretched hand to outstretched hand;

With heart to heart, with sigh for sigh,
With conquered eye to conquering eye,
Amid a thousand dreaming charms,
She sank into the hunter's arms;
Nor longer could her lips refrain,
But sighed: "I love you, just the same."

Such were the scenes past which the two
Were wafted in the birch canoe,
Such was the grandeur that unfurled
To loving hearts, a faultless world.
Oh, who can wonder that the flame
Of conquering love at last o'ercame?
What frozen soul would set aside,
With stern formality and pride,
To wretched fate, or drive away,
The heart's own true affinity?
Such might become the social dame,
Whom, all rebuking, seeks but fame,
Within whose breast there throbs alone
A loveless, cheerless heart of stone,—
A social, self-designing tool,
A mistress to some landed fool,
Whose gilded brow, but brainless head,
Boasts of a record of the dead,
But furnishes for thought a womb
As fruitless barren as the tomb.

Ye, who to social strides aspire,
Degenerate offspring of a sire,
What hast thou done, what glories rise,
To mark thee worthy in God's eyes?
'Tis not what did thy grandsires do,
Nor what they were, but what are you?
This is true glory; this alone
Deserves the sculptor's deathless stone.
And every other boastful claim
Is mockery at the shrine of fame.

There are such as believe a crime
Love without courtship's test of time;
That woeful way which often ends
In fatal marriage of mere friends;
But when god Cupid, with a blow
Of flaming arrow tests his bow,
Mark you the wild impulsive sway
Of hearts that brook no long delay.
Determination stirs each soul
Like compass clinging to its pole.
The loving maiden trusting stands
And lays her future in his hands.
Joined by some diplomat creed,
With God a witness to the deed.
A vital strength such bonds retain
When longer love becomes disdain.

Upon the rocky strand they stood,
And, gazing over lake and wood,
They watched the red sun sink to rest
On the cloud pillows of the west,
And bathe them with a lover's ire
In glowing robes of living fire.
Ah, sweet enthusiast, who knows
Why mantled to her cheek the rose;
Why to that strong embrace she sprung,
Why to his manly form she clung,
Like clematis to tower tall,
Or clinging ivy to its wall.
Those who have felt that glowing flame
That beggars every word for name,
Defying language to express
A likeness to its fond caress,
Might easily the cause espy
Or read the answer in her eye.

As dreads the song-bird, when the year
Rolls round, the autumn, brown and sear,
And sweeps the forest in its ire,
Bathing the leaves with warmthless fire;
As throbs the robin's crimson breast,
To leave the treasures of its nest,
When fierce the murderous hawk assails,
And swift it seeks the brambled vales;

As sighs the lonesome, mournful dove
Of hopeless, unrequited love,
With dread, with throb, with deeper sigh,
The hunter bade the maid good-bye.
But ere he turned he lingered still
And pointed to the rock-bound hill:
"Agnes, my own! where yonder brow
Of rugged stone hangs over now;
Up where that stubborn, narrow trail
Leads to the mountain from the vale,
Past where yon stunted pine leans o'er,
A thousand feet above the shore,
That with a dizzy height supplies
A reeling vision to the eyes,
There, on that towering rocky ledge,
A cavern yawns upon the edge,
With room to safely shun the fall
But for one traveler,—that is all.
'Tis said in some far distant day,
A chieftain held that rocky way.
His hunting ground the mountain-crest,
Yon cave, his chosen place of rest.
A savage of such wondrous might
That all fled trembling from his sight:
His arm the rifted oak could wield,
Of solid stone his weighty shield;
In war, a terror to all eyes,
In peace, a tyrant all despised.

Nor him did strongest bow annoy
To bend and break it like a toy.
Thus, fierce he lived, with passions wild,
Devouring many an infant child.
A cannibal, so fierce for blood
No squaw companioned his dark mood
But that, ere long, the mountain-stones
Became a shelter for her bones.
Thus dwelt he there from year to year,
The harbinger of death and fear.
To hush, the pappoose sent to bed,
Ere early twilight hours had fled,
The mother's tongue need but release
The name of Black Hawk, and 'twould cease,
And nursing infant's wrath to tame
Needed but mention of his name.

"Once as he slept within the cave,
A warrior, from across this wave,
Came by the cliff as, far below,
The owl began its tale of woe.
And heard the sleeper's mighty snore
Re-echo from the hill to shore.
Nerved to the deed by awful sound,
His moccasins sped o'er the ground;
Noiseless and swift, he scorned to stay,
But let the echo guide the way

That backward sought the rocky bower
Where lay the chieftain in his power.
Around yon rocky cliff he wound,
As swift and noiseless as the wind.
But paused when first the effort gave
An instant's access to the cave,
Where quick his vision wandered o'er
The chieftain on the stony floor.
His massive arms were thrown apart;
His shield lay heavy o'er his heart;
His battle-axe aside was thrown;
His head fell back upon a stone;
And knotted veins moved to and fro
Across his throat, to guide the blow.
The youth a moment paused for breath,
Gazed on the giant form beneath,
Raised his stone battle-axe in air,
Then left the headless body there.
The horrid visage, stained with pride,
He placed within the cavern's side,
And as an emblem of the strife,
Locked in its jaws his hunting-knife.
Thus, travelers from across the wave
Call the dark spot the haunted cave,
And say who ere shall enter in,
Amid the cavern's twilight dim,
And view the horrid visage grim,
Perched high upon the rocky wall,

That very self-same day shall fall
In slumber, and receive the blow
Of death from some relentless foe.
Nor e'er awaken to the grief;
But die, as died that savage chief.
Let not such folly that you hear
But stay your step with idle fear.
Agnes, a fortnight from to-day,
If fearless you will risk yon way,
Within the mountain's grottoed throat
Will hide for thee my waiting note.
Further beyond the narrow brink
The ready parchment, pen and ink,
The eagle's wing shall give the pen,
The mountain polk supply the stain,
The parchment these," and forth he drew
And spread the posters to her view.
"What fine collection this, my maid;
What tempting offer for my head!
I ne'er imagined, since my birth,
Myself of such intrinsic worth.
In the last years, to my surprise,
My value in the monarch's eyes
Has so increased, his worthy hand
Ere long might grace a grant of land."

As the youth saw the weakening eye,
And as he marked the escaping sigh:

“Ah, maid !” he said, “think not, alone :
Bear the hatred of the throne.
From Canada’s cold sterile line
To Georgia’s soft vernal clime
Each settler tea tax has refused,
Who daily sees his rights abused.
Nor all of England’s martial pride
Can falter freedom’s mighty tide.
When thou art from me, at thy will,
Give me some product of thy skill.
Weave me a faultless banner fair
To battle with the mountain air,
That as a solace it may be
A sweet reminder, love, of thee.”

“Oh, Rolland ! cruel is the day
That calls thy wandering feet away.
Glad will I risk beyond the shore
Where lies the haunted cave of yore,
And gladly shall the breezes feel
The product of my spinning wheel.
The pennant that I weave for you
Shall be the Stars, Red, White and Blue.
The stars, thy ever-watchful eyes,
Like burning planets, guard the skies,
And to the night their radiance shed,
When long the faithless moon has fled ;

The red, thy never-yielding arm
To evil, violence, and harm;
Yet seeking ne'er the murderous might,
But bold and fearless in the right,
To leave the strife without regret,
First to forgive, and then forget.
The white, may like it be thy soul,
Spotless and free from sin's control,
That when the evil thoughts arise
Will seek the counsel of the skies;
And last, a plain of endless blue,
That Agnes ever will be true.

“But, Rolland, ere you bid me go
One secret is there thou shalt know,
That secret from imprudent heart
Affection bids me to impart,
E'en though I desecrate the laws
That marks a traitor to a cause.
Deep down in yonder fort there lies
A youth late taken by surprise;
E'en now perhaps condemned to die
As mountain malcontent or spy.
For martialled at the fort this noon
A court of war to seal his doom.
A youth, for, mark you, he is young,
Nor scarce to bearded manhood grown,

But brave and silent 'mid his fears,
As he is innocent in years.
I saw him when the guards consigned
Him to the walls that have confined
Those only in their dungeon's hold,
Companions to its damp and mould,
Till hope inspires insanity
Or death has set the captive free.
I saw him as he entered in
And almost wept to comfort him;
Nor to the guard one look he gave,
But bore with resolution brave,
Each taunt, each threat, that dared profane,
With wicked curse, thy dreaded name.
'Twas night, at last, the stars were hid
By many a cloudy pyramid;
The moon, half blinded, shot one ray
Along the dark imprisoned way,
As if to guide my steps aright,
Or bless the mission with its light,
Till down the musty steps of stone
I darkling groped my way alone.
Soon there, I paused, for well I know
Each dark recess that lies below,
Where often from the summer's heat
My childish footsteps sought retreat.
But little dreamed its mouldy scent
For such unholy uses meant.

Thrice on the steel I struck the flint
And blew the spark upon the lint,
Until my taper from the maze
Of glowing embers took the blaze.
O God! my lips refuse to tell,
It seemed a very niche of hell."

Here paused the maid, while Rolland stood
Like a dumb statue in the wood;
Nor could the sculptor's chiseled stone
Such ashen, pallid hue have known.
Dumb, for his heart was torn with grief;
Nor hope inspired one disbelief.
Pressed by the youth's anxiety,
The maiden hastened to reply:
"By the dim taper's flickering glow
I saw the hidden vaults below.
Rock wall around, and upward spread,
Like monuments above the dead,
Bore evidence of ancient time,
Embossed with damp and white with slime,
Where groaning underneath their pains,
A form lay bound in prison chains.
At first no heeding eye it gave,
But lay like one within the grave.
Then calmly upward turned that stare,
Disdainful of a keeper's care.

But with a second look the eye
Melted to heartfelt sympathy,
And well I knew my woman face
Softened that glance to childish grace,
Who, while pretending that he slept,
Murmured a mother's name and wept.

"O, God! be endless grace denied,
And countless tortures multiplied,
On him who fashioned first with stones
Such hideous dens for human bones!
Scarce, Rolland, longer could I stand,
The taper swayed within my hand,
The name of 'Mother,' like a dart,
Come from such sorrow pierced my heart,
And flint, and steel, and lint, and all,
Into the dungeon I let fall.
Then, like one wakened from the dead,
Unto the outer world I fled.
The moon slipped deep within a cloud,
The guard the watchword called aloud,
And as I heard the 'All is well,'
As from the sentinel it fell,
It summonsed all my woman's pride
To keep from shouting that he lied.
But such vile falsity increased
My vow that he should be released.

Though I that dangerous aid should bring
And prove a traitress to the King."
Here Agnes now her tale suppressed
And silent wept on Rolland's breast.

"Angel of Mercy! Peace, oh! peace!
Be calm and let thy sorrow cease.
In yonder dungeon now there lies
Of all a woman's heart, the prize;
E'en yet a mother's hopeful joy,
For he is nothing but a boy.
But oh! what nameless grief is hers,
Oft sanctified with holiest prayers
O'er pillows steeped with tenderest tears,
Ere to the war she sends with fears
The staff of her declining years.
What sorrow, yet what pride must be
Such sacrifice to liberty!
Clarence, my sister's only child,
Inspired by freedom, fierce and wild,
Entrusted to my promised care,
Glad would I own his bondage there.
Hast thou no thoughtful plan to save
The blood of infancy they crave,
Is there no way, no hopeful way,
To bid that cruel vengeance stay?
Yes; there is one! Let fate's decree
Fall from that gallant youth to me.

Tell them that youthful captive's ward
Was through the mountain pass your guide,
Who as a ransom here will bring
A head more prized by England's King
Than all the infant blood that flows
Or suffers his tyrannic woes.
'And when the answer you have heard
Up to the cavern bear me word."

The maid her loving face uprears
Fresh from the altar of her tears,
'And love, and hope, and woe allied,
Mingled with one sweet look of pride,
Vowed in that second of unrest
More than her lips had dared express.
With that they bade a fond adieu,
'And separate they each withdrew.

But tell me, sophist, tell me why,
So long delayed the sad good-bye.
Why, why, they lingered till was heard
The twitter of retiring bird,
And hoot-owl from a dizzy height
Begun its doleful watch o'er night.
More than mere gratitude, I ween,
Was master o'er that parting scene.
'Twas more than friendship's lowly name,
Or stern propriety's strict claim,

That bends with fixed and steady rule
The o'er-pious craftsman o'er his tool.
Who turns disdainfully the eye
When nameless beauty wanders by
Or gives the cloister its laws,
Might any, fain, not guess the cause?

They parted as the shades of night
Obscured the mountain's dizzy height,
And long the fiery flames had flown
From off the towering peaks of stone.
The hunter sought the cheerless chain
That hovered southward o'er the main,
And soon a parent's lips imbue
A maiden's prize, a mother's due.
Dark rose the mountains. Deep between,
Hid by the night, lay each ravine,
Where darker still, beneath the pine,
The insulted moon refused to shine,
And where the owl, with wailing throe,
Poured to the hills its tale of woe.
High over all, the Milky Way,
That trailing ghost of vanquished day,
Led by the warring planet, Mars,
Swept like a tidal wave of stars
That from the very heavens sent
From out the starlit firmament

A myriad of glittering lights that came
To set the slumbering lake aflame.
And by reflection laid to rest
One streak of fire across its breast.
And up above the sleepy tide,
The wolf howled on the mountain-side,
As if complaining of the fate,
That hungry kept it prowling late.
But all along the mountain bare
No other sounds disturbed the air,
Save where the foaming torrent fell
With sleepy rumblings through the dell,
And ceaseless seemed to roll along,
Less like a sound, more like a song.
Nor further did the noise awake
The hillside than the neighboring brake.
For now each mountain flower was blest,
For every breeze had sunk to rest,
And not a leafy branch was stirred
To waken in its arms, the bird.
As if all sounds of every kind
Were silenced by the touch of time,
And every sign of life had fled,
And all things of the earth were dead,
When high above the vaulting cliff,
That towered skyward stark and stiff,
The echoes rose and lingered long,
Where some late wanderer sang this song:

SONG.

“How dear, oh ! how dear, is the fond recollection,
That back to my mind, like a touch from the
grave,
Sweeps over my soul with a tender affection,
And brings me the kiss that at parting she gave.
If life could be endless forever without her,
And deathless be raised from the earth to the
sky,
I would rather one moment, thy arms were about
her,
And hail with delight in that rapture to die.

“How heavy my tread journeys on o’er the mountain,
Each toil-laden step turning distance to pain,
Had I wings, could I fly, like a bird to the fountain,
My soul would return to thy bosom again.
Oh, Agnes ! My own ! As the flower is yearning,
On yon barren hill for the evening of dew,
So the soul of my bosom awaits the returning,
And sighs for a drop of affection from you.”

CANTO III.
FORT TICONDEROGA.



CANTO III.

FORT TICONDEROGA.

The torch of day had scarcely shed
Its fires upon the mountain-head,
Calling in endless depth to view
A spotless, cloudless sky of blue,
Than in the neighboring wooded vale
Rose the armed host of Rolland Dale,
That battle-tired, forgot their woes
And sank in slumber's sweet repose.
Along the verdant mountain-chain
Each warbling songster poured its strain,
That wild with joy, commenced to sing
A welcome to the new-born spring.
The wren, a truant from its nest,
Climbed skyward far o'er all the rest,
And baffling the eye to trace
Its warbling unseen song through space,
It sang as if it strove to tell
The story where but angels dwell.
And through the wood each songster fair,
With merry carol thrilled the air,

And woke a thousand joyous lays
That spoke their hearts in endless praise.
Where deep within the woodland grew
A myriad flowers bathed with dew,
And where, high on the briary thorn,
The rose vied with the blushing morn,
While sought the beauty of its bloom
A comrade in the sweet perfume;
Nor was the mighty host that came
An armed host alone in name.
For full a thousand answered here
The bugle of the mountaineer,
Where floated to the breeze above
The ensign of his land and love.
But from the mountain to the sky,
Nature, awakening, seemed to cry:
“Back! Soldier. Backward turn! By far
This sacred scene too grand for war.
The gaping wound, the crimson flow
Some arid, barren strand might know;
Or on the coarser fields of earth,
The sword of battle might give birth.
But here, what warrior’s arm could raise,
When all the air resounds with praise?
What cruel spirit now detains,
Or leads thee ’mid these sacred strains.
If to this earth one spot is given,
Touched with the attributes of heaven

Free from the sorrow or the tear,
Stay! Soldier, stay! that spot is here.
Where yon far-distant cliff deters,
There loose thy savage worshippers;
And let the dry earth drink their gore;
A fruitful harvest-field for war.”
But war’s unceasing tread pressed on,
Heedless of mountain, flower or song.
For oft and long the crimson flood
Had drenched these hills and vales with blood.
While all along the mountain chain,
Fair Britain’s sons, untombed, lay slain;
The broad and silent voiceless wave
Gave the dead mountaineer a grave.
For thousands on that mighty tide,
In manly combat fought and died;
Nor other, nobler shroud they need.
Wrapt in the glory of the deed,
Deep in the watery tomb they lay,
Sleeping the centuries away,
Where while the storm awakes the waves,
In rolling tumult o’er their graves,
A mighty nation points with pride
To where they sleep within the tide.

Sweet was that rest. Ere break of day
A soldier trod the mountain way,

Who looked with father's care around,
Where sank the army to the ground.
With silent tread lest he alarms
His warriors sleeping on their arms,
He wandered through the joyous dell,
Beyond the watchful sentinel.
For long the night before was fraught
With death and danger while they fought.
And long he smiled to see them blest
With wholesome sleep's long-needed rest.
The birds began their warble sweet;
'The flowers awakened at his feet;
And far above the mountain high,
The eagle battled with the sky.
Enough of daylight came before
To light his steps along the shore;
Enough to guide each careful move,
Reflected from the peaks above,
Give vision to the mountain way,
Where, 'mid a bank of flowers, lay
Red Cloud, his faithful guide and friend,
And gentle nature seemed to lend
That rest which sheer exhaustion brings
When care departs on slumber's wings.
While his good hounds around their prize,
Guarded the woodland with their eyes.
Well now the sight recalled to mind
Sweet memories of another time.

The chieftain's sleep, the troubled dream,
The broken pipe, the startled scream,
The busy night, the restful dawn,
The boat, but, ah! the prize was gone:
Was gone; nor conquest of the eye
Awoke but the intrusive sigh.
The watchful hunters spied their friend.
The cliffs a whining echo lend.
The woods, awakened to the sound,
Trembled beneath their mighty bound,
Nor hushed till at the soldier's side,
His hand the soft caress applied,
And lavishly he laid the stroke,
As thus unto the hounds he spoke:

"Hail! fleet champions of the chase,
Close guardians of thy master's place,
No longer let thy whines annoy
His happy dreamless rest of joy.
Well I remember when before,
Far south, along this self-same shore,
Startled to fear and flight, you bayed,
Into my arms a timid maid.
Oh, would again that hour were here,
And thou an angry foe drew near."

The instant thought was scarce expressed,
A tender tremor swept his breast,

And a keen eye besought the cave
High on the mountain o'er the wave,
That rose scarce touched with summer time,
Where hope invited him to climb.
He climbed. The dogs, without alarm,
Sank peaceful round their master's form,
Contented, for with ready zeal,
They each had shared his morning meal;
Then turned their slantant eyes at will
Where strove the soldier up the hill.
A thousand times he breathed her name;
A thousand tender blessings came;
And floated from his lips, to die,
Like clouds within a summer sky.
He wondered had fair Agnes brought
The missive he so hopeful sought.
But feared to search the cave with care,
Lest disappointment might be there:
For long the wintry paths were free
From mountaineers, more skilled than she;
Nor might a maiden dare ascend
The winding, rugged paths that wend
'Around the dangerous rocky dome,
Where still the winter sat enthroned;
That conquering spring had scarce reclaimed,
'And where some lingering snow remained.
But when he first beheld the prize,
Within the crevasse 'neath his eyes,

He gave a sudden shout of joy,
Like some exultant, happy boy,
That wakes on Christmas morn to pause
Before the gifts of Santa Claus.
With fervent hand he grasped the note,
Quick from the grotto's flinty throat,
As if in fear the shout he gave
Might wake some demon of the cave,
Who, angered at the echoed din,
Would leave its dark abode within,
And, violating nature's laws,
Lock firm within the massive jaws
Love's token, there to ever dwell,
A prisoner in a flint-bound cell.
Nor would the cavern light reveal
The slender writing, or the seal;
He paused, he looked, a moment more,
His foot besought the rocky door,
Where the gray dawn with glory shed
Light on the letter as he read:

"DEAR ROLLAND, long the weary days
Since last my eyes with rapture gazed
Upon a tender note of thine;
Hence, 'tis with fear I send thee mine.
A fear, that daily broods alarm,
Though oft I pray thee safe from harm.

A thousand pardons now I ask,—
I dared not try the wintry task,
Nor could I trust the faulty way,
Where many mountain dangers lay,
But to assure the note is there;
I send it by thy friend Le Clair.
Last night (of course unknown to me),
Clarence escaped and now is free.
Scarce, Rolland, do I lend an ear,
To idle gossip that I hear;
But when a straggling Hessian said
Near White Face Peak he left the dead,
Where the grim carnage strewed the land,
Cut from thy faithful following band,
My being sank, in wild despair,
I breathed to heaven one fervent prayer,
But quick kind memory came to aid,
The fervent prayer of hope I made,
For I remembered that I saw
That very night the self-same squaw,
Who gave me shelter, warmth and fare,
When first I taxed thy precious care.
She blessed me once again and swore
She saw thee but an hour before;
Still further vowing, while she kneeled,
Her chief was with thee on the field.
And when the truthful memory came,
With reason to my weary brain,

The Hessian's word I there defied,
And boldly told him that he lied.
Oh, Rolland! how I chanced to make,
I know not, that one sad mistake.
The Captain, mother, and the guard,
Shocked at my uncouth disregard,
Pressed questions like the summer's rain,
And firmly forced me to explain,
While in the heat of anger then,
'Mid more like demons than like men,
There, Rolland, on my bended knee,
I swore by heaven I loved but thee.
My guardian was wild with grief,
But grew more calm in disbelief,
But mother, when the scene was o'er,
Drew me within and closed the door,
And, like an angel from above,
Chided my fears and blest my love.
Thy friend, Le Clair, when all was through,
Vowed that the Hessian's tale was true.
Can such pretensions be a cheat?
Such boasted friendship but deceit?
For soon I saw the squaw again,
Beyond the fort upon the plain.
The tale repeated, scarce was told,
I kissed her hand, I gave her gold,
And watched her as she turned the hill,
Beyond the old stone water-mill,

Where back she waved a blessing kind,
Her lone dog trailing on behind.
And 'mid the gathering shades of night,
The two passed onward out of sight.
Oft, Rolland, do my prayers ascend,
For thee in blessings without end;
And as my trust in God relies,
May heaven guard my wandering prize.
And oft, too, 'mid my prayers I pause,
To breathe good fortune on thy cause,
That should it either rise, or fall,
Like Ruth, I now surrender all.
No further proof the wing can tell,
God bless thee, Rolland: fare thee well.
Ticonderoga. AGNES BELL."

Morn, like a queen in gorgeous dyes,
In the far east began to rise.
As if the sun, but to admire,
Spread o'er her path one sheet of fire.
While she, resplendent 'mid her bowers,
Spread her rich shades among the flowers.
For here the violets of blue
Drank from her purple robe each hue;
And held their heads aloft to her,
From the dark blue to lavender;
And the rich mountain butter-cup,
Lifting its new-born blossom up,

Caught the first kisses when, behold,
All the rich blossoms turned to gold;
And on the silent hill each one
Bloomed like a mimic floral sun.
And the young soldier's lightened heart
Seemed of the very morn a part.
Pride to his heaving bosom swelled,
As he the glorious morn beheld,
And plucking from its lowly bed
A tender violet, he said:
"Pride of the vale, a maiden's eyes
Vie with the azure of thy dies.
And to her lovely cheeks are born
Tints that are fairer than yon morn.
Light is her tread; as yonder glow
Steals o'er the cliff to vales below.
So does her very presence seem,
Like the sweet coming of a dream."
But as he once more scanned the page,
Rose to his face a flush of rage,
Nor could a thousand thoughts disguise
Fire that was anger in his eyes.
Wondering, he thought perhaps Le Clair
Lurked in some hidden ambush there;
Oft at the thought his wandering mind
Caused him to turn with glance behind,
Marking each stubborn rock that rose
Like a grim shelter for his foes.

“Banish the fear!” at last he cried,
Turned to the cave and went inside,
Where with a ready quill at hand,
’Twas thus the answering letter ran.

“MY OWN:

“If when at Heaven’s gate I am weighed in the balance and found wanting in love to the Creator of the universe, oh, Agnes! remember that my very all was given to thee, and a test of sincerity will be my deficiency of it, when at Heaven’s door. I can conceive of no dream so beautiful, or no place so grand, temporary or eternal, earthly or celestial, that can be compared with that shrine, thy heart, before which I humbly bow, and pour forth the most fervent devotion of my unworthy soul. Touched with the tenderest of affections, may each care of thy bosom be lulled into instant peace, and every haunting dread of thy tender nature, fly like a demon before the avenging foe. May Heaven’s choicest blessings be the allotted share of thy guiding Providence, and thou; its favorite child. Remember me constant in thy evening devotions and accept my unyielding love. The warriors are sleeping below. I am writing this in the mountains upon a rock.

“Yours affectionately,

ROLLAND DALE,
“Ye Mountaineer.”

Long had the morning sunlight shone
High o'er the battlements of stone,
Ere Rolland Dale, descending down,
Beneath the mountain's mighty crown,
Heard the rich echoes rise and fall,
In answer to the bugle call,
For long the rocky cliffs had borne
A backward answer to the horn;
And faint and far, the soft reply
Rose upward on the air to die:
But wakened in the hills remote,
Where rang the echoed trembling note:
As if within the granite breast,
Of every rugged mountain-crest,
That rose above the distant dell,
A fairy bugler chanced to dwell,
Who sent a soft repeating trill
In mellowed answer from each hill.
But ere the shades of night came on,
Up from the western horizon,
Dark pillared storm clouds swiftly rose,
Frowning like mighty vengeful foes,
That hung from mountain to the sea,
One dark and threatening canopy.

Within Ticonderoga's yard,
Agnes sat spinning near the guard;

And oft she cast the strand aside,
To gaze along the waveless tide,
Where through the marshland, everything
Seemed answering the call of spring.
But now she closed her azure eye,
Took up the strand and breathed a sigh,
As if her active fingers there
Lessened her grief and eased her care,
And free from thought's unkind turmoil,
Her mind found ready rest in toil.
The polished bobbin swiftly sped,
Winding with countless turn the thread,
When suddenly an impulse came,
From whence she knew not, to her brain,
As instantly she dropped the strand,
And gazing skyward from the land,
Saw a young thrush with flaming breast,
Toil with a tendril for its nest.
The startled bird could scarcely soar,
O'erladen with the weight it bore.
And fearing that it dare not make
The tiresome journey o'er the lake,
It dropped the burden from its bill,
And turned again toward the hill.
Down, down it came; with silent mirth,
Agnes beheld it fall to earth.
But turned with pity when she heard
The carol of the vanquished bird,

That cried a plaintive warble sweet,
While sank the tendril to her feet.

A mountain flower the thrush had torn,
Fresh from the hills, yet scarcely born
And at her very feet there lay,
The sweetest snowy bloom of May.
She grasped the flower; she held the prize,
A moment 'neath her azure eyes,
But with the foremost thoughts that came
The chieftain's words swept through her brain:
Who long before the warning gave,
And told their fortunes by the wave:
And with a thousand instant fears,
His words again rang in her ears:

*"When first the daisy lifts its head,
In snowy bloom from mountain bed,
Though fierce the storm, though dark the night,
Let not these evils stay thy flight,
But when the storm with fearful wail,
Strikes down a monarch of the vale,
If 'mid the crash thy step be stayed
Then seek the friendship of thy blade,
For near Ticonderoga's wall,
There waits the murderous rifle ball."*

As memory brought the words to mind,
A thousand thoughts arose unkind.
"Soon, soon," she cried; "alas, too soon,
Has come the mountain daisy's bloom.
Nor has the waste of time allayed
The forecast that the chieftain made;
My precious bird, ah, many a day,
I'll bless thee for this broken spray;
And long will cherish near my breast,
The flower that might have been thy nest."
She placed the blossom in her gown;
Then rose and calmly looked around,
As to assure no eye had known
That sacred treasure save her own.
But when she cast her eye away,
Where deep the towering pillars lay,
A sudden thought her cheek enfired,
As the red evening sun retired
Behind the battlements on high,
Where rose the storm clouds in the sky;
And while the blackened pillars reared
With threatening frown, she disappeared.

The drenching storm swept o'er the land.
The scattered battle-weary band
Sought, on the distant mountain crest,
The numerous caves, and sank to rest,

And, guarded by the storm alone,
Stretched their tired limbs on beds of stone.
But sleep to Rolland's eyes was strange.
Nowhere along the mountain range,
The most inviting cavern deep
Tempted his energies to sleep.
Though fierce the lightning in its wrath,
Swept with a terror o'er his path;
Darkness and storm were both his friends,
As up the lake his way he wends.
For on such nights, the Hessian guard
Sought shelter in the fortress yard.
And now the mountain paths were clear,
Where oft the ambushed foe was near,
For what but fancy would impel
A maniac to guard the dell.
Fiercer the angry storm drew nigh,
Around his head the very sky
Seemed to have fallen from its height,
And settled, mingling with the night.
The lightning many a cliff revealed,
The thunder like a cannon pealed,
While shook amid the awful din,
Each stalwart parent trunk and limb.
Onward beneath a flash of fire,
He saw the stricken deer expire.
Charred by the lightning's cruel stroke,
Its shattered antlers burnt and broke,

In crisp dismembered fragments lay,
Around the carcass on his way.
While down each defile to the shore,
The raging mountain torrents tore,
And with a mighty flood of foam,
Swept the huge boulders from their home,
And tossed them from the mountain-side,
With anger to the storm-swept tide.
Each stalwart tree that towered near,
Shook with an innate trembling fear,
And bowing low their forms sedate,
Mourned to the wind the dreadful fate.
For fierce the lightning's vivid flame
Brought rending terror as it came,
To fell the mightiest trees that rose,
Like chips beneath the woodman's blows
Or like the slender barley frail,
Falls 'neath an avalanche of hail.
A moment as the soldier stayed
For shelter in the angry glade,
The mightiest monarch of the shore
Wrenched from the earth with frightful roar,
And, yielding to the awful shock,
Crashed into splinters 'mid the rock.
He paused; he lingered, he stood still,
While rang the crash from lake to hill,
That answered back the frightful yell,
As if the very heavens fell.

Then turned a prayerful eye on high,
With thankful reverence toward the sky.
But worse by far than storm was there;
Behind him in the dark, Le Clair,
Nerved with the hate of vanquished love,
The storm a murder cloak above,
With rifle leveled from his breast,
With finger to the trigger pressed,
Awaited the electric flame,
To lend true vision to his aim.
Wild with a joy, his anxious mind
Flattered the murderous hope unkind.
As he communed with night alone,
And murmured thus in undertone:
"Now, traitorous mountain warrior, soon
The lightning flash shall seal thy doom.
Nor other shall thy senses know
Than that 'twas heaven dealt the blow.
Nor o'er exultant shall I bring
Thy head, an offering to the King,
But, weighted by these mountain stones,
Beneath yon wave shall rest thy bones."
But when an unexpected flood
Of fire disturbed his thoughtful mood,
Up on the hill, where scarce the tree
Had torn its fibrous anchors free,
A rifle rang; the sudden view
Served well to guide the missile true,

For down beneath the swaying trees
Le Clair sank prostrate to his knees;
But though the lightning up on high
Gave vision to a faultless eye,
And true the steel's unfailing spark
Drove the lead missile to its mark,
The flint that stood before his eyes
Cheated the bullet of its prize,
That, shattered by the awful blow,
Disarmed the wretch, but saved his foe.

Had in his camp to instant birth
One Hessian risen from the earth,
Who, by a valiant combat, gave
War to his combined followers brave,
No greater the surprise had been,
Than had that instant given him.
And quick the startled youth sank down
To safely shelter on the ground,
Pressed the fresh powder to the bore,
And ready straightened up for war,
Not knowing but that what he rose
Within a hornet's nest of foes.
Calm grew the storm, but not a word
Above the tempest could be heard;
Watchful and silent, both they stood,
Wrapt in the darkness of the wood.

One in the valley nerved to move,
The other timidly above.
But quick the warrior broke the pause:
"Stranger, by what inhuman laws
Dare you, a heartless murderer, lay
In ambush on the mountain way?
Speak, or, as sure as once again
The lightning flash illumines the main—"
But ere the finished sentence came:
"I am a friend," rang the reply,
And Rolland quickly gave the lie.
For suddenly amid the storm
He saw the British uniform.
But single foeman ne'er had stayed
His foot on mountain hill or glade.
"Surrender!" and, with mighty leap,
He climbed in darkness up the steep,
Nor paused until another yard
Had thrust him on the British guard,
Whose ready rifle stood at rest,
Primed and well aimed on Rolland's breast.
"Halt!" came the cry. "By whom, I pray,
Am I thus summoned to obey?
Advance one step, and thou art doomed
To slumber in a mountain's tomb;
One step, and then 'twill be too late
To ward the danger of thy fate."

But when he heard the silvery tongue
That told him that his foe was young,
A smile of admiration rose,
Well worthy of far mightier foes.
And long that earnest look he gave,
For still the beardless youth was brave.
When lo, behold, what grand surprise,
A flash betrayed to each their eyes,
And knowing she was safe from harm,
Leaped forward into Rolland's arms,
And weeping sobbed above the gale,
"My lord, my love, my Rolland Dale."

Long weeks with anxious care were rife,
Since Agnes saved the soldier's life.
The harvest moon, a silvery maze,
Had set the mountain tops ablaze.
Far to the east, the Pleiades,
Like fire-flies swarming through the trees,
Between the branches now and then,
With tangled radiance swept the glen,
Till, leaping to the open sky,
The trembling sextet climbed on high.
Then mighty Ursa Major came,
Prowling the sky with tail aflame.
Where in the distance dimly shone
The guide-star of the frigid zone.

And low down in the burning west,
A million stars each cliff caressed,
As if in honor to the glade,
They westward marched on dress parade.
And, leading the procession down,
Beneath the star-lit horizon;
Ere slowly sinking from the sky,
Venus looked back, and said: "Good bye."

Within the tepee that arose
Under the cliff was found repose,—
Repose, not such the sleepless kind,
That adds but terror to the mind,
Where 'mid the city's crowded homes,
The sweltering victim fretful groans,
Tossing from side to side the head,
That rises weary from the bed,—
But nature's sweet, refreshing, cool,
Like guards the mountain's sparkling pool.
Unknown to every other clime
In August's fretful summer-time.
And not one sighing summer breeze
Wakened a murmur from the trees,
But stayed as if some force of air
Fettered its wings and held it there.
The earth, the air, the lake, the sky,
Seemed with the silent night to vie,

Where long the noisy mountain rill,
Chiding its babbling tongue, was still.
And at the tepee's open door
Lay a lone hound upon the floor.
Dozing, with dull half-open eyes;
Patient it watched for some surprise;
All ready, at the sound of harm,
To wake the woodland with alarm.
Thus long it eyed the slumbering dell,
A lone but faithful sentinel.
Deep in the tepee's shadowy folds,
Lay the dog's mistress, bent and old.
Care, that had creased her wrinkled brow,
Like startled ghosts, had vanished now,
And left a peaceful smile instead;
She slept as peaceful as one dead.
But slumber's most uncertain tide
Spread to a tempest rough and wide,
And cast life's fragile, trembling bark,
On o'er its waters wild and dark.
She dreamed; in fancy's fair disguise,
A hundred omens seemed to rise,
To sweep the slumbering eye and ear
With many a sight and sound of fear.
She saw the swarming Hessians sweep
Down from the mountain's rugged steep,
Where now her chief, with mighty blow
Of tomahawk brought down the foe.

And while each victim's heavy breath
Rang with the echoed cry of death,
She heard old Red Cloud's battle yell,
Ring as the wounding hatchet fell.

As fierce in slumber now she eyed
The strife, she tossed from side to side,
Each feature answering the mind,
The smile of slumber cast behind,
And sent a flush of rage where now
Anger lay settled o'er her brow.
She saw the Continentals brave,
Turn routed to the distant wave,
From where their feeble few had stood,
Drenching the rocks and hills with blood.
She watched the Hessians follow down,
In wild pursuit from mountain crown,
Like leaves before the winter's gale.
Like hounds upon the scented trail.
But when the swift descent was made,
A war cry signal swept the glade;
And long and loud the mighty call
Re-echoed through the mountains tall;
As if the rocky cliffs that rose,
Might harken to their echoed woes;
And wide their secret portals throw,
In shelter from the pursuing foe.

Loud rang the shout from cliff to sky.
And as in answer to the cry,
The very mountains seemed to rend
Apart; their rocky breasts to send
An armed horde; as if the din
Wakened a host that slept within,
That from each rugged mountain scar,
Poured forth in multitudes to war.

The Hessians fell like fall the leaves
In autumn from the blasted trees,
Before the flood of fire and flame,
That from the newborn warriors came;
Who at the war cry's echoed sound,
Seemed to arise from out the ground.
The mountain brook that swept along,
Rich with a constant summer song,
Grumbled as though it dread to make
Such bloodstained offering to the lake;
For ne'er in all the years before,
Tainted, its tide had sought the shore.
But when in dreams she saw the rout,
And heard her chief's victorious shout,
Each muscle in her swarthy frame
Seemed to join in to chase the game.
And foremost 'mid the mountain men,
In rage she swept across the glen,

With battle in her savage eye:
With ready dagger poised on high:
With one exultant leap in air:
She held the weapon o'er Le Clair.
Than gave one wild triumphant yell,
As with a demon's stroke it fell.
No longer slumber's claim can bind,
Where sweeps such conquest of the mind.
And the old squaw, half rising now,
Raised her clenched fist above her brow,
And at the sudden frightful scream,
Suiting the action to the dream,
Straightened her arm for mighty blow,
And struck the otter robe below.
The startled watch-dog gave a yell;
The owl ceased hooting in the dell;
The fox from out the valley sprung;
The robin fled and left its young;
The panther, at the sudden sound,
Sought its rock den beneath the ground;
The startled hawk awoke in fright,
To stretch its pinions to the night;
While the bald eagle, half asleep,
Spread its broad wings from off the steep;
And far across the silent lake,
Where rose a cabin o'er the brake,
The rooster, startled on its bower,
Like clarion crowed the midnight hour.

'All mingled sounds in wild surprise
Brought vision to her glaring eyes;
Again her anger shook the glade!
"Down, Serpent! Down!" The dog obeyed;
'And, fearful of her angered hand,
Sank trembling at the first command.
For since awakened was her ire,
But fuel unto fury's fire,
Both long and wild her cries resound,
Where hugged the watch-dog to the ground,
For angered more to think its cries
Awoke true vision to her eyes.
Until the dream had witnessed done,
The murderous deed so well begun.
She grasped the bludgeon at her side,
And the thick, cruel club applied,
Nor long the punishment defers,
For crimes that more than half were hers;
Then cried, as turning to the hill,
"Down, Serpent! Down!" The dog lay still.

The starlit sky, a maze of light,
Held for a time her searching sight,
As if by some strange savage power,
She sought within its depth, the hour;
And, though it now was long from day,
Started along the mountain way.

Far in the rear, upon her trail,
Serpent, with drooping ears and tail,
Shivering with fear, forsook the place,
And followed at a trembling pace,
As if he waited on behind,
The summons of her voice more kind.
But when from her no welcoming word
The guardian of her footsteps heard,
Faithful unto the very last,
Resumed his uninvited task,
And stealing upward, till she feels
His trembling presence at her heels,
He bounded on in merry play,
And, leaping forward, led the way.
Nor was the task an easy one;
Far to the westward sank the sun,
Ere the old squaw, by hunger pressed,
Paused at a mountain brook to rest,
And, with a sudden touch of pride,
Sought for the pouch that graced her side.

Made of the lizard skin, it hung,
The grewsome bag of medicine.
Many and strange the charms that lay
Stored in its hidden folds away.
Claws from the owl, herbs from the hills,
Teas for a thousand countless ills.

Fangs that but fiercest venom knows,
Torn from the snake; and lizard toes.
These were among the charms the hag
Fostered within the grewsome bag.
Quick at her touch the magic case
Sank from its long accustomed place,
While she relieved its depth with care,
Of the dried sinews of the bear;
Weary, she bathed her temples cool,
Deep in the forest's freshening pool,
Then sank to rest her limbs awhile,
Tired from each long toil-laden mile,
That in the distance lay behind,
Counted by hours in her mind.
Serpent, with anxious, hungry eyes,
Stood at her feet and watched the prize.
Catching each fragment with a bound
Ere the dry morsel reached the ground.
While his wide open jaws exposed,
Fierce in their strength, the ivory rows.
But ere the day's repast was done,
Loud rang the watch-dog's wailing tongue.
While to her feet the old squaw sprang,
When the first note of warning rang.
There, by a rock, within the weeds,
Sparkled the rattler's eyes like beads.
Nor was she scarcely warned of harm,
Than the mad reptile gave alarm,

And for the barking, watchful foe,
Coiled its thick form to strike the blow.
First, as if anxious for the prize,
Fixed on the rattle were her eyes;
Then with a hissing sound she came,
Urging the dog upon the game.
Skilled to the art, the agile hound
Leaped at the snake with teasing bound.
Until its fast increasing ire
Answering the dog's long sought desire,
Shot forth its thick, uncoiling length;
Full in the air, with double strength,
Schooled to the task, he leaped aside,
As the vile mouth spread open wide;
Down from their folding pockets sprang
Ready, the deadly poisonous fang.
But as the serpent's form swept by,
Wild rang the hound's exultant cry,
And leaping with well guarded paws,
Mangled the reptile in his jaws.

Twelve times the charm she counted o'er,
Once for each button that it bore;
Then with a joyous shout of glee
Cleaved with her blade the trophy free,
Believing that the noisy charm
Vanquished each near approaching harm.
Quickly she sought the sun-dried fare,
Gave the good dog a meagre share,

And, with an eager, tiring stride.
Pressed on with Serpent at her side.

No longer now the light of day
Returned one feeble, guiding ray,
But dark the shadows fell before
Her weary footsteps reached the shore,
And deep, unbroken darkness fell,
Over the cannon-guarded dell.
Down in the west the sun was gone,
And the pale twilight hastened on,
Where, like a distant, murmuring growl,
Came the low hooting of the owl.
Far to the east a cabin light,
Flickering between the day and night,
A double purpose well supplied,
As swept its rays along the tide,—
Good cheer within, without, a guide.

Long rang the old squaw's screeching cry,
Back from the lowlands to the sky;
And lingered 'mid the mountains tall,
With echoed ring the savage call.
Agnes, who knew the summons, came
Quick to the spot with heart aflame,
Fairer than was the woodland bloom,
That bathed the dale with rich perfume,
Or the sweet lily, that below
Spread on the lake its breast of snow.

“Hail, mother of the woods,” she cried,
“Welcome once more upon the tide,
Friend of my sorrows and my fears,
Comforter of my woes and tears.
What mission guides thine aged step,
When ’tis the rightful hour to sleep?
And Serpent, too. Ah, bless the day
I met him ’neath the mountain way.”
And at the mention of his name,
Wagging his tail, old Serpent came,
And, rising to the maiden’s breast,
Waited her gentle, soft caress.
Silent at first, the squaw stood still,
Deep in the shadow of the hill,
Then waved her blessing o’er the maid,
And drawing closer, faltering said:
“A weary journey, tiresome task,
Answers the question thou hast asked.
Pressed to the trail my lot has been,
Weary alike of foot and limb;
Nor have I known of slumber’s boon
Since I last saw the midnight moon.
Far to the south my tepee stands,
Free from my ever guarding hands,
That, should a sudden storm arise
Out of these threatening northern skies,
Vain might my weary footsteps yearn
Shelter and rest at my return.

Or a still sadder fate by far
Waits in these troubled times of war.
Many the band of Hessians now,
Hovered beneath each mountain brow,
Where, when they find an absent chief,
Plunder rewards the wandering thief.”
Long was the story that she told,
Of conflict fierce, of battle bold.
The hills re-echoed to the wail,
As angry she retold the tale,
And emphasized, with gestures rife,
The flight, the war cry, and the strife.
“List, maiden, but a moment more,
And then my fretful tale is o’er ;
Nor dare my truthful story deem
The idle omen of a dream.
Burgoyne is vanquished ; ’mid defeat,
Disorder marks his quick retreat.
The battle ground is strewn with dead,
He and his Hessian followers fled,
Where to the autumn breezes wave
The Stars and Stripes thy effort gave.
Soon is the bitter conflict o’er,
And England will forsake the shore,
The bugler shall forget his strain
And conquering peace begin its reign.”

Ere the squaw ceased, the maiden’s glance
Sought the dark mountain’s broad expanse.

For Agnes had been reared to know,
The pity due a vanquished foe;
And oft with effort strove to dry
The swelling tear within her eye.
She listened, but despite her care,
One drop rose 'mid the lashes there,
That, as she vainly strove to speak,
Came gently down her pallid cheek.
Nor e'er upon the bridal morn,
Did choicest jewel maid adorn,
While envious beauty crowded near,
'As did that noble, silent tear.
It seemed to it a light were given,
None as of earth, but all of heaven.
She turned her trembling lips in air,
She breathed to heaven a murmuring prayer.
Amid the darkness of the wood,
More like an angel there she stood,
Who, interceding with the throne,
Holds converse with its God alone.
The murmur ceased, the prayer was done.
She turned; but dog and squaw were gone.

The strife was done, the war was o'er;
On fair Virginia's distant shore,
Where freedom's valiant arms had won,
Cornwallis bowed to Washington,
And, pressed by every ocean breeze,
The vanquished Hessians crossed the seas.

'Twas autumn. High along the chain,
The frost had visited again,
And painted with a master's skill,
A golden garland round each hill.
But underneath the mountain crown,
A second summer settled down.
Like e'er the fatal stroke of death,
Robs the pale victim of its breath.
The marshalled energies once more
Revive, as in the days of yore,
As if some providential power
Had thus designed the dying hour,
To light anew the faded eye,
With strength to bid the world good bye.

Long Rolland marked the shadows crawl,
Along the mountains stubborn wall,
And watched the stars above the glade,
Cease twinkling, grow dim and fade,
Till in their places high instead,
The early dawn its crimson shed;
Nor paused to mark that glorious ray,
Lest the enchantment brought delay.
Cheered on by many a buoyant hope,
He climbed the last long stubborn slope,
Just as the day its banner waved,
Around the entrance to the cave.

Strange was the scene; some magic power
Seemed to have changed each sylvan bower;
And mountain ivy, that had climbed
And close the entrance entwined,
Beneath October's chilly breath,
Blushed with the golden glow of death,
That wakened to the autumn morn;
Vied with the rainbow's varied form.
And as in praise, the deathless trees,
In answer to the gentle breeze,
Sang to the wind their tuneful chimes,
That changed each shade a thousand times,
And lit, before his wondering view,
Each leaf with scarlet blaze anew.
Scarce had he paused but to admire,
The cavern seemed a cave of fire,
That some strange genii's weird command
Had brought to earth from fancy land;
And there before his vision hurled
The entrance to another world.
He paused, he looked; with measured stride
And cautious glance he went inside,
But to receive him sat despair,
And fear and disappointment there.
No longer did the quill employ
This rugged Mecca of his joy;
No longer did the parchment rest
Secure within the cavern's breast;

For pilfering hands long both had found,
And strewn their atoms o'er the ground.
Nor this could baffle hope alone,
He sought the crevice in the stone,
And strained his vision, where his eyes
Met with a grewsome, wild surprise;
For o'er the grotto, damp and dull,
Grinned, from its rocky perch, a skull.

The hunter's heart was brave, but here
Such sudden sight brought instant fear,
As he through cavern twilight dim,
Beheld the horrid visage grim;
And quick a fertile memory gave
The ancient legend of the cave.
A skull so large might well adorn
Some savage chieftain's massive form,
And long intent amid the gloom,
He gazed where Black Hawk met his doom,
While the huge, horrid visage pale,
Lent truth's conviction to the tale.
The arch was broken, from the blow,
Perhaps, of some revengeful foe.
The war paint still adorned its cheek,
The mouth, as if it yet might speak,
In ruthless token of the strife,
Clutched in its broken jaw a knife.
And from the hollow orbs, where roll
In life the windows of the soul,

From out their gloomy orbits shed,
A living lustre from the dead;
This temple, where both thought and pride
Each reigned triumphant ere he died,
Where once the smile of joy was there,
Or furrowed lay the frown of care,
Now friendless sat amid the gloom,
And turned the cavern to a tomb.
A moment still he stood amazed,
A moment at the visage gazed,
Then silent turned and left the cave
With the strange tenant of the grave.

Now thus he mused: The strife is o'er;
No fear have I along this shore,
Unless it be that soul of Cain
Who desecrated love's domain,
With mind diseased, and passion spurned;
By fallen cause, love unreturned:
His heart with evil long imbued
Might harbor vengeance unsubdued.
Cease, thoughts, to apprehension given.
But day and night, by travel driven,
Have worn upon my strength, until
I scarce would venture from this hill.
'Tis early; on yon gentle rise,
Where the lone pine waves to the skies,

The fallen shatters be my bed ;
And when my morning prayer is said,
While the gnarled branches of the tree
Croon to the wind a lullaby,
With every care resigned to sleep
I'll trust my safety to the steep."

Alone and at the break of day,
Le Clair came up the mountain way.
And as the rapid pace he kept,
Some dreadful impulse stirred each step ;
For oft the mountain path he tried,
With many an agile leap and stride.
At sight of him, the dove flew past ;
The hawk forsook the morn's repast ;
The wild bee paused its busy wing,
With wilful suicide to sting ;
The wily gopher ceased its toil ;
The serpent drew its deadliest coil ;
The fox, now frightened from its prey,
Turned from the hill and fled away ;
And timid quail, as on he came,
Spread their fleet wings and did the same ;
And in the distance, ere it flew,
The pheasant hushed its wild tattoo,
But with that instant rose to fling,
The dewdrop from its rapid wing ;

And the bold eagle, from the crest,
Where it had paused to feast or rest,
Turned from the crag a watchful eye,
And with that moment sought the sky.
All nature seemed it need but scan,
To dread the presence of the man.
The sun forsook the vaulting blue,
Slipped 'neath a cloud and hid from view;
And tardy blossoms on the hill,
Awakened to the autumn chill,
Seemed sheltering 'neath their leaves in fear,
Each withered offspring, dwarfed and sear;
The chestnut, that from bowers brown,
A wealth of autumn nuts sent down,
Where high above the hazy glen,
The squirrel stored them in its den,
Let fall its leaves like winter's snow,
To hide the downy nuts below;
While at the instant sight of him,
The squirrel clung dormant to the limb;
High up the path he hastened on,
But not until he long was gone,
Did squirrel climb again the snag,
Or eagle settle on the crag,
Or serpent crawl forth as before,
Or gopher dig its hole once more;
Nor did the fox's fear abate,
Or quail call piping to its mate,

Or, with a hollow distant hum,
Was heard the pheasant's echoing drum.

Alone, with vengeance in his eye,
He mounted upward toward the sky
Until, upon a rugged crest,
Where the bold sky-king frames its nest,
He paused to view the wondrous scene—
Far in the valley deep between,
Two mighty crags that left the plain,
Like giant brothers of the chain.
Well might the vision charm the eye.
Above him hung the vaulting sky,
Wherein no pendant claimed his glance,
Throughout its fathomless expanse,
Save where the eagle chanced to swing
Athwart the sky a soaring wing.
Each mountain path he closely scanned,
And arched his eyebrows with his hand,
Then searched with features drawn and grave,
The plateau near the haunted cave;
Where far above the distant vale,
Enwrapped in sleep lay Rolland Dale.
Too far to trust uncertain aim,
Too wary of the awakened game,
He hastened, with a cautious stride,
Adown the mountain's rugged side.

And as he reached the vale beneath,
He drew the dagger from its sheath.
As wildcat on the slumbering hare,
As fox on partridge unaware,
As panther on the resting doe,
So sneaked Le Clair upon the foe,
With ready dagger poised on high,
And death and murder in his eye.
The eagle saw the glistening blade,
The panther paused within the glade,
The gray wolf, pressed by savage greed,
Gave a faint growl to urge the deed,
And paused with hope's undaunted zeal,
To feast upon the human meal.
The robin and the russet thrush,
Fled screaming to the distant brush;
As if their eyes might not behold
Such heartless murder fierce and cold.
A moment, and he raised his hand.
A moment, and the glistening brand,
Ere its descent with fatal dart,
Paused steady o'er the sleeper's heart.
Le Clair was anxious to the strife.
He cast an eye upon the knife.
The anger gathered on his brow.
The devil whispered to him: "Now;"
When suddenly, afar beyond
The cavern that beneath him yawned,

Like glows the instant flame of fire,
When wakes Vesuvius in ire,
Like thunder's unexpected crash,
Rang out the rifle's echoed flash.
The mountain trembled to the sound,
The shattered dagger sought the ground.
Le Clair recoiled beneath the shock,
And Rolland Dale leaped from the rock.
Unnerved, and yet scarce understood,
He gazed o'er mountain cliff and wood,
And, where the distant cliffs extend,
Saw the blue puff of smoke ascend.
Then quick to heed the dangerous hour,
Anger aroused its latent power;
And quick the deed to understand,
He gazed first on the wounded hand,
That late had grasped the shattered knife,
Then raised his eyes in thanks for life,
Blest his strange guardian below,
And turned on the imploring foe.

"Down, fiend! nor mercy dare they crave
Only the valiant from the brave.
Not e'en deservant of the blow
The savage chieftain deals the foe,
But far 'mid yon dismembered stones,
A shelter for thy mangled bones,

Where bays the wolf's bloodthirsty tongue,
And lurks the panther with her young;
There should the awful fate be thine,
Were this another hand than mine.
Yon friendless skull within the cave,
Denied the solace of the grave,
Torn by thy hands from out the tomb,
And placed within the cavern's gloom,
Speaks to the living from the dead,
And cries for vengeance on thy head."
With less of anger in his tone,
He paused to heed the feeble groan,
Weaker and weaker as it came,
Exhausting life's departing flame,
His glassy eye was fading fast,
His deeds of violence were past,
And pity bade him sheath his blade,
And offer to the foeman aid.
For well he marked the fading eye,
And well he knew that death was nigh,
As down the mountain's rugged side,
Life's crimson poured its lavish tide,
Not scant, but free as mountain rill
That leaped beside him from the hill.
The shattered sleeve he steeped within
The current of the mountain stream;
But ere the quenching draught he gave,
Or kneeled the victim's brow to lave.

The recreant's cold, stary eye,
Returned no thanks for sympathy.
"Rouse, make thy orison, Le Clair.
By sin's confession, cross or prayer,
Thy feeble hope of heaven prepare;
For here upon the mountain way,
Thy lifeblood slowly ebbs away;
Prepare thy only hope of weal,
Ere death has stamped its voiceless seal."
But fate denied the offered boon,
Nor breathed the orison of gloom.
Across the mighty chasm deep,
Where rose the rocky, pathless steep,
A second time the rifle's flame,
With roll of distant thunder came.
From cliff to cliff, the fiery shout,
Repeated back again rang out;
And far beyond the distant dell,
Its echoed rumble rose and fell,
Like warders answering the call,
Where one lone guardsman holds the wall.
Le Clair gave back a feeble groan,
And then sank lifeless on the stone.

Intent, the soldier turned to view,
Where rose the trail of smoke anew.
From off the cliff, with straining eyes
He watched and waited with surprise,

Till circling a distant ledge,
A form came forward to the edge,
Where rose aloft in bold relief,
The profile of the mighty chief.
His dogs, with upturned noses came.
Each on the alert for the game,
Seemed doubly vexed that they should fail,
The wounded antler on the trail.
The chieftain gave a soft hallo,
The mountains answered sweet and low;
The bobolink, with warbling note,
Sang as to burst its trembling throat;
The quail flew up with sudden hum,
The pheasant beat its hollow drum;
The blushing robin in the vale,
Told to its nesting mate a tale;
The bob-white answered from the hill;
The cliffs returned the whippoorwill,
And at the soft and gentle breeze,
That sweetly sang among the trees,
From off the mountain's lofty crown,
The chestnut poured its harvest down;
The wren, the bluebird and the thrush,
Warbled as if they ne'er would hush,
And long and loud they sang farewell,
Ere soaring southward from the dell.
All living nature seemed to sing;
The eagle tried its tireless wing,

The rabbit gamboled round its bed,
The startled owl awoke and fled;
And far from 'neath the mountain way,
Came up the housewife's tuneful lay,
Of peace that now was drawing near,
And hopeful harvests' bounteous cheer.

The captain's house was open thrown
Where his ancestral armor shone;
Emblazoned on a suit of mail
The sign of honor told a tale,
And spoke with endless, deathless praise,
Of chivalry and feudal days;
Nor was his noble race defiled;
A warrior weds a warrior's child,
As brave, as mighty, and as bold,
As were the valiant knights of old,
Who, fearless of the warder's call,
With spear and buckler stormed the wall.
Nor might the noblest disdain
This hero of the mountain chain.
For men are simply what they are,
And honor glorifies the scar
On him alone who dares essay
To sweep injustices away.
Nor does it, when the deed is done,
Descend transcendent to the son

Save as he struggles to sustain
That sire's love-cherished, deathless name;
That should he falter, should he fall,
The wretch, inglorious, forfeits all.
Thus, at the temple of renown,
One builds it up, one tears it down.

A hundred guests assembled now,
Beneath the elm's stately bough,
Turned with a sudden quick surprise,
Where a fair vision met their eyes,
That in the distance rose to view,
As swept the squaw the light canoe,
And decked an feathery array.
The proud chief pointed out the way.
But ere the old squaw's agile hand,
With dexterous paddle sought the land,
One sweeping gesture bade her make,
The course far out upon the lake.
And tossing o'er on either side,
His hounds afar within the tide,
He grasped the blade; the quivering shell
Awakened 'neath the mighty spell,
And tossed the water into spray,
That dared resist its rapid way;
But when the mighty, sweeping oar
Shot the canoe high on the shore,
He turned with anxious eyes to trace

The progress of the oncoming race;
Low in the tide the hounds came on,
And agile limbs pressed fleet and strong;
While from the shore the cheering crowd
Called to the leaders long and loud,
And oft conjecture passing round,
Named many as the winning hound.
The chieftain gave his hunting cry,
That, echoing from lake to sky,
It seemed to fire the race once more,
As on the chase in days of yore;
But when the squaw, with frightful scream,
Sent a wild warning o'er the stream,
While back the cliffs their answer gave,
Where strove the pack to breast the wave,
One hound, that struggled in the rear,
Awakened with an instant fear,
And, as the echoed warning fell,
A warning that it knew too well,
It answered with a plaintive yell.
Nor had her wild shout been in vain,
As on toward the shore they came,
Its head arose above the rest,
The waters parted at its breast
In waves, as if within the foam
Some unknown power pressed it on.
'A moment now it fought the tide,
'A moment they were side by side,

A moment more, with instant speed,
It shot far forward in the lead;
In vain each struggling limb was pressed,
In vain the chieftain cheered the rest,
In vain his wild cry echoed back,
Above the rapid swimming pack;
For when they reached the tiny bay,
Abreast within the tide they lay,
But Serpent, struggling, led the way,
And mounting to a rocky ledge,
That rose above the water's edge,
Gazing a moment he stood still,
Shook his wet loins, then climbed the hill,
Nor paused, till his admirers saw
Him trembling fall before the squaw.

Near to the fort, its boastful pride,
A spring flowed from the mountain-side,
Where, often kneeling at its brink,
The passing wanderer paused to drink.
The overhanging ledge of stone,
Rich with the moss was overgrown,
Where might the envious eye discern
The ivy twining 'mid the fern,
'Neath where the stately holly stood,
Touched with a thousand drops of blood.
And rising over all on high,
The gnarled oak swept athwart the sky,

Where from its arms swung to and fro
The berries of the mistletoe.
And casting o'er the rugged glade,
A welcome labyrinth of shade,
It rose with shadows dark and cool,
The silent guardian of the pool.

Here 'neath the oak the feast was spread,
'Here by the spring the two were wed,
Where, 'mid the flowers on its side,
Nature an altar there supplied.
Within that sylvan house of God,
Whose noble hassock was the sod.
And the brave captain, by the child's
Persuasion sweet was reconciled.
But woe the luckless, hapless fate,
That now I falter to relate;
For when they reached the woodland spring,
The blundering parson dropped the ring,
That, bounding from the rocky crest,
Sank out of sight within its breast;
But luckless fate could not delay,
By trifling loss their wedding-day;
For the bright ring that long adorned
The smooth mouth of his powder-horn,
Released its hold beneath the clasp
Of the young hunter's wondrous grasp.

He wrenched the silver circlet free,
And smiling bended to the knee.
The shining band his grasp relieved,
Her snowy finger soon received,
As with an instant blush of pride,
Agnes sank kneeling at his side.
And ne'er did knight, in war's array
Returning glorious from the fray,
While youthful lords and waiting grooms
Gaze envious on his battle plumes,
Look half so noble or so fair,
As did the hunter kneeling there.
The captain took her hand and smiled,
Then gave away his blushing child,
Whose lovely smile, upturned to heaven,
Seemed only waiting to be given,
But soon forsook the azure skies,
And rested full on Rolland's eyes.
The embarrassed parson blundered through,
Not well the nuptial words he knew;
Vexed at his awkward loss, the plight
Made memory from his mind take flight;
But generous hearts will now maintain,
Perhaps the vision dulled his brain,
To think the fee, from one so fair,
In memory's absence brought despair;
For such the treasured fee of bliss,
The honor of the bride's first kiss,

Might well upset a stronger mind.
And now a scene of such a kind
Could make—should ours that fate befall—
A bold John Alden of us all.

The words were said, the deed was done,
Rolland and Agnes now were one.
And as the parson stepped aside,
To take the accustomed kiss, the bride,
Turning a bashful glance on high,
Showed merry mischief in her eye.
But how the parson chanced to miss,
Ne'er will he know, that proffered kiss;
For with a joyful, timid wail,
She sprang from him to Rolland Dale,
Who, 'mid the roaring laughter now,
Offered a shelter to her brow,
And cried, as pointing to the spring,
"First, parson, first go find the ring."
The parson at the challenge sprang;
And loud the echoed laughter rang,
And soon the slender golden band
He found, and placed upon her hand,
And pressed by teasing maid and dame,
Gracefully took his rightful claim.

The chieftain smiling tried the reed,
Then struck his flint above the weed,

'And as he raised his feathered head,
'And turning to the maiden, said:
"Smoke first the pipe of peace, my child."
'Agnes beheld the pipe and smiled.
Round as it passed throughout the crowd,
Rose peals of laughter long and loud.
'And answering the mirthful din,
The distant echoing cliffs joined in,
That brought from far above the wave,
The blessing of each mountain cave.
But when the captain eyed the bowl,
A memory wakened in his soul;
A moment at the clay he gazed,
And then, half smiling, stood amazed.
"Ah, chief," he sighed, "I hope no stain
Upon this trophy lays a claim.
I know it well; though now 'tis thine,
Its eboned lustre once was mine.
And he who chose this trophy, meet
Reward, where death could claim defeat,
Refusing the well earned assault,
Was brave and generous to a fault."
The chieftain looked toward the youth,
And smiled, for well he knew the truth.
Then cried: "Once more the eboned prize,
Ere envy dulls the admiring eyes,
Is thine; nor does my memory know
Such trophy from the vanquished foe.

But rather, to a conquering will,
Whose lasting wounds are open still,
I yielded heart, I yielded hand,
To friendship's everlasting brand.
This is the trophy; may it be
A like reminder hence with thee."

The feast was spread, each merry guest
Joined in the revel with the rest.
But fate decreed that none should make
Their pillow o'er the wedding-cake.
That sacred sentinel that stands
As love's guard over slumberland;
For while the bashful parson now
Was stammering through the marriage vow,
A pilferer, with hungry eyes,
Seized the sweet icing-covered prize,
And, sinking in the sombre shade
That settled o'er the quiet glade,
Beneath the mighty oak tree tall,
Serpent, the rogue, devoured it all.

Those days are past, those scenes are o'er,
'And foes invite to strife no more,
While in its long embrace the grave
Makes of that proudest king, a slave.
Within St. George's stoic gloom,
An humbled vassal of the tomb,

He sleeps, and, mouldering at his side,
Alike his sceptre and his pride,
Rebuke before the world each hour,
The futile foolish boast of power;
While on the western hemisphere,
Like some tall mountain bold and clear,
From whose eternal crown of snow
Flows the rich streams that sweep below,
A mighty nation's form ascends,
A towering Matterhorn of men,
That offers 'neath its summit tall,
A welcome peaceful home to all.
Those days are past, and still we live,
While friendship cries: "Forget, forgive;
Forget both nations' suffering,
Forgive the errors of a King;
For from that very source we sprung,
The children of the selfsame tongue."
And answering that plea to-day,
Proudly we close the past, and say:
"To every deed alert, alive,
Long may old England live and thrive.
And may it of King George be said,
Like of that valiant knight long dead,
'His bones are dust, his good sword rust,
His soul is with the saints, we trust.'"

Our flag, fair ensign of the free,
Emblem of right and liberty,

Born are thy colors of the flood,
That flows where heroes shed their blood.
And bathed, while all the world reveres,
Thy folds with patriotic tears.
Morn's earliest dawn of crimson glow,
No fairer, purer tints can know;
Nor earth's most balmy breezes bear,
A rarer presence to the air.
Beneath thy waves, the widow's lot
Of woe and sorrow, all forgot,
She pours an adulation wild,
That bids thee guard the orphan child.
'Tis thee our country's care allays,
While infant children lisp thy praise;
Thee that enfires the warrior's eyes,
Or soothes his sufferings when he dies.
To every flag, of every tongue,
Let sweet encomiums be sung;
Let song exhaust its bounteous claim,
And poets pour their loftiest strain.
But when before a startled world,
Was freedom's banner first unfurled,
Then tyranny, by time reviled,
Died on the land it had defiled,
And angels wept and heaven smiled.

How long, O Fate, will heaven's decree
Protect our banner of the free!

How long ere concentration's hand
Has swept the glories from our land,
And to an age of sad disgrace,
A serfdom takes a kingdom's place.
For in these false, degenerate times,
When courts within themselves are crimes,
And desecrators make our laws,
Well may the prudent, thoughtful, pause.
One hope, one only hope, remain,
To ward the nation's hands of chains.
As long as justice be our guide,
As long as honor be our pride,
As long as we avoid a throne,
Be honest and remain at home,
And give each subject of the soil
The honest product of his toil,
So long will peace and plenty stand
As guardian naiads o'er our land.

Those days are past, those scenes are o'er;
Along Lake Champlain's fertile shore
The sceptre of a king has fled,
Where peace and plenty rules instead.
A hundred years have swept the hand
Of cruel conflict from the land.
Where now beneath the azure skies,
A thousand thriving hamlets rise,

There to replace the battle's din,
Peace reigns without, love rules within.
Those days are past; yet still remains
The long, unbroken mountain chains,
Where, 'mid a thousand deathless charms,
The lake lies sleeping in their arms;
The fleet foot wanderer of the waste
Still through the laurel leads the chase,
And still the hound's re-echoed bay.
But of those actors, where are they?
O where are they? But heaven knows.
The summer suns, the wintry snows,
Oft kiss the hills, or chill the waves,
To bloom, or lock, their silent graves.
'And, watching o'er their narrow cells,
The seasons are their sentinels.
But still, to-day, great armies pour
In countless thousands to that shore.
Long may the multitude increase,
An emissary each of peace,
To linger where the wanderer finds
A Mecca for toil-laden minds.
Those times are past, those years are gone,
As here I think of them alone;
Through all these scenes my gentle guide
Rests on the table at my side:
Its brilliant presence charms the room,
Yet fading now invites the gloom,

While tired my eyes turn to admire
This waning friend ere it expire.

Farewell! Companion of the midnight hour,
No wonder thou wert once Aladdin's power!
Thou art the same to-day. But heaven knows
The lasting debt mankind unto thee owes.
In youth, long hast thou been a friend in need,
And taught the infant's untrained eye to read.
Thou art the same in manhood's rugged prime,
And lend thy rays to charm the evening-time.
In age, but for thy aid, the blind would fall.
O Precious Lamp! We owe thee more than all.

THE END.



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